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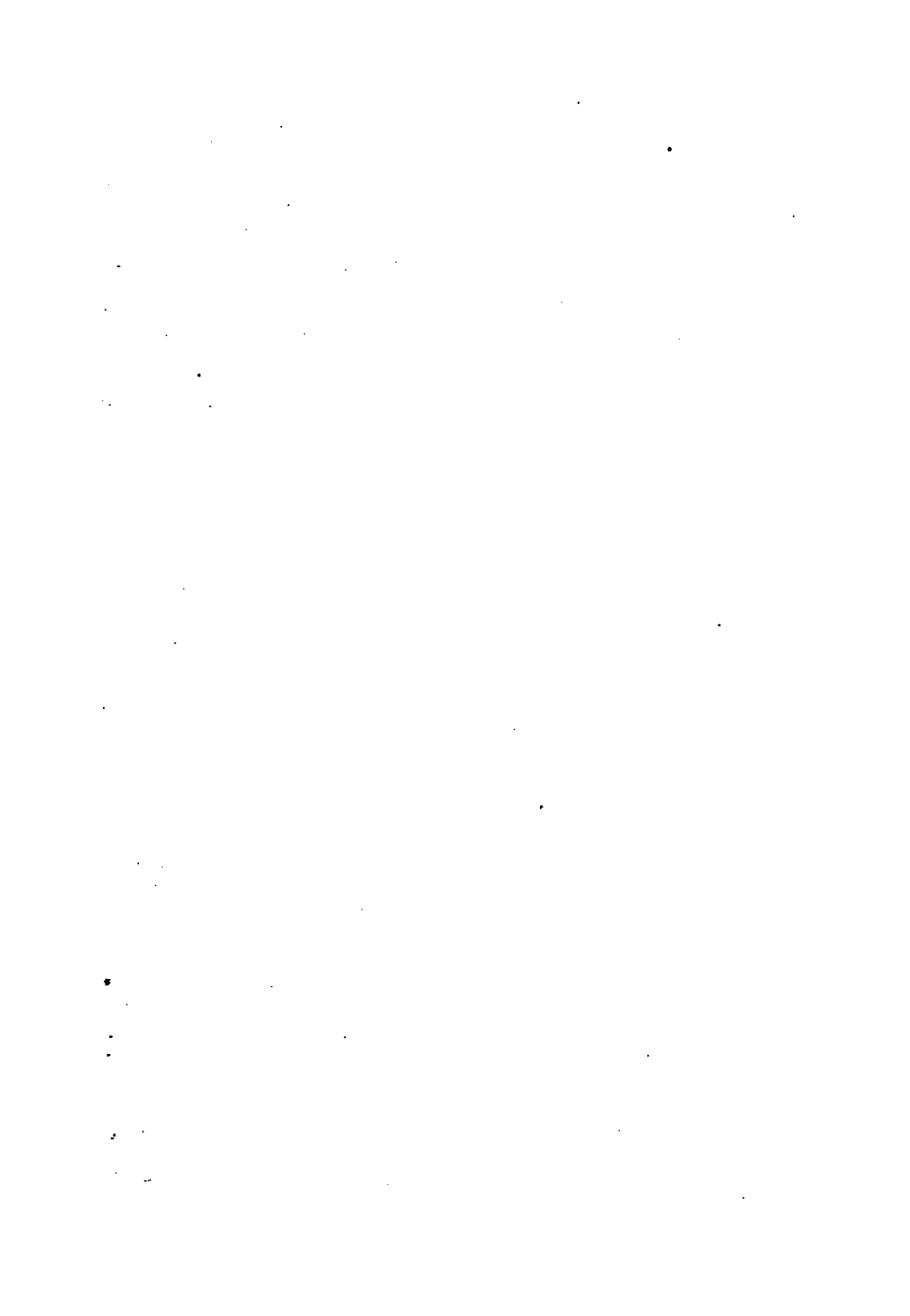
By  
JAMES H. RIGG, D.D.





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# THE LIVING WESLEY.





THE  
LIVING WESLEY,

AS HE WAS

In his Youth and in his Prime.

BY

JAMES H. RIGG, D.D.,

PRINCIPAL OF THE WESLEYAN TRAINING COLLEGE, WESTMINSTER;  
AUTHOR OF "MODERN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY," "THE RELATIONS OF JOHN WESLEY  
AND OF WESLEYAN METHODISM WITH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,"  
"ESSAYS FOR THE TIMES," ETC.



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## PREFACE.

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FIVE-AND-TWENTY years ago, I used to cherish the hope that some day I might write the Life of Wesley and the History of Methodism. The latter aim has been anticipated, with great competency, by two writers—by my living friend, Dr. Stevens, in America, whose vigorous and vivid volumes require no praise from me, and by my greatly beloved and now deceased friend, Dr. George Smith, in my own country, with whom I was in close correspondence throughout the whole of his work in preparing his valuable history. The utmost I could now hope would be to elucidate some points of Methodist History, especially between 1780 and 1800, and from 1848 to the present time.

Even after Mr. Tyerman's diligence, I think there is yet room for an original and standard life of the Methodist reformer, which should be at once shorter and in some respects more satisfactory—clearer, and more discrimi-

nating as to some matters of primary importance. I cannot but fear, as years pass away, and duties and engagements multiply around me, that I may not be permitted to attempt the execution of what I had contemplated so long. But, though my desire should thus go unfulfilled, I shall still have reason to be thankful if in the present publication I shall have been enabled to do something toward furnishing a true portraiture of John Wesley in his human affections, in his intellectual character, and in his gifts and power as a preacher.

JAMES H. RIGG.

WESTMINSTER TRAINING COLLEGE,  
LONDON, *August*, 1875.

ERRATUM.

Page 120.—Read *rectory* for *rectorate*.

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# THE LIVING WESLEY.

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## PART I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

#### *WESLEY'S BIOGRAPHERS AND CRITICS.*

THERE are some questions as to Wesley's character and the nature of his influence still unsettled ; indeed, as I shall show, he is very imperfectly understood as yet. But there can be no question as to the immense spread and depth of the motive energies which he has been the means of originating within the nationalities of England, with all her Colonies, and of the United States, not to speak of the critical and determinative influence which has been exercised by Methodism upon the Protestant thought and life of France, and even of Germany. No single man for centuries has moved the world as Wesley has moved it ; since Luther, no man. No Protestant Church at this day counts so many adherents as the Methodist family of Churches ; no Church has operated so powerfully as a ferment of life among all the other Churches.

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If these things are so—and nowadays men will hardly venture to deny the truth, at least in general, of what I have stated—it is no wonder that the present age has waked up to an eager curiosity as to the character of the man, the secret of his power, the meaning of his work, the history of his life. Long ago Dr. Southey perceived the capabilities of this theme; historian, man of letters, and poet-laureate as he was, he treated the character and life of Wesley with a respect and ability worthy alike of the subject and the writer. It was inevitable that such a philosophic Churchman as Southey, such a semi-rationalistically-orthodox Anglican, should commit serious errors in his attempt to portray and estimate such a character as that of Wesley. It was equally inevitable, with no other sources of information, in addition to Wesley's Works, than the "Arminian Magazine," and the very imperfect lives of Wesley which had been published by his over-worked, hurried and driven, and, as literary men and historians, untrained itinerants, the best life which Southey or any other writer could produce at that time should be defective and incorrect. He had no access whatever to the special sources of information without which no life of such a man could be justly or adequately

written, and which it was as yet too soon after the death of Wesley to expect to be given to the world. But, with all its faults, the work produced by Southey was so beautiful in its style, and so skilful in its use of the materials at his disposal, that to this day it has remained—now for half a century—the one biography by which Wesley has been known to the world. Men have not read the *Lives* written by Whitehead, Coke, and Moore—for many years, indeed, these have been out of print, and it would be an injustice to the name and memory of Wesley to reprint any of them; but Southey's *Life of the Methodist Reformer* has been in every important and well-chosen library, whether of a public institution or of a private mansion; and its fascination has not failed to secure for it successive generations of readers.

Wesley's life, indeed, as written by the Tory historian, reviewer, biographer, and poet, as written in the best style of one who was a master both of the English language and of the biographer's art—became at once an English classic, and, what is much more, raised the character and memory of Wesley at once, in the circles of men of high and thoughtful culture, to a place of eminence and respect often rising to veneration. Nor was



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it only to Wesley that Southey did, according to his light, generous justice; he did justice also to the humble but great and noble men, such as John Nelson and the soldier Haime, who were Wesley's early and chief lay-helpers. He showed these men in their true light, as manliest among men and saintliest among saints; as men of no less steadfast power than fervid zeal; as among the heroes of the holy Christian warfare. Thus the total effect of Southey's "Life of Wesley" was to elevate the Methodism of Wesley and his followers to a place of permanent interest and honour before their countrymen, and, we may say, before the world.

Southey, indeed, as I have intimated, misapprehended some leading particulars in Wesley's character, and accordingly misconstrued broadly, in certain directions, his motives and his conduct. He conceived ambition to be the leading natural feature of his character, and to have powerfully prompted and controlled him through life—the ambition of the ruler and the statesman; he resolved, moreover, the wonderful effects of his preaching into the natural results of potent and penetrating oratory, managed with consummate skill by a master alike of speech and of the art of turning circumstances and situations to

account. For these fundamental errors he was most ably and severely searched and called to account by the Rev. Richard Watson, in his well-known and very valuable "Observations on Southey's 'Life of Wesley,'" and his misconceptions in this respect have also been effectually disposed of very recently by Miss Wedgwood, in her essay on Wesley—Miss Wedgwood, having apparently never read Mr. Watson's "Observations."\* Still, with all its errors, and notwithstanding its necessary defects—notwithstanding its evident Anglican prejudices and its pervasive taint of rationalistic sense-dogmatism and spiritual insusceptibility—Southey's work is so interesting, so genial, so candid, so evidently sincere, and even generous, in its spirit, that it ought ever to be regarded by the followers of Wesley as the work, not of an enemy, but of one who meant honestly and kindly, and who has really, on the whole, done the office of a friend. Southey himself indeed, became convinced that he had wronged Wesley's memory and misunderstood his character; and if he had lived to bring out the new edition which he had in contemplation, he would have made a correction of his errors.

\* "John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the 18th Century." By Julia Wedgwood. London: Macmillan.

Whether Mr. Watson's criticism had any share in bringing about this change I know not. Southey's own account of it, given to the late learned and amiable James Nichols, *littérateur* and printer, of Hoxton Square, in an autograph letter of which a *fac-simile*, very interesting to look at, if it were only for the elegance and neatness of the writing, is engraved in Dr. Smith's "History of Methodism," \* states that Mr. Alexander Knox, in "a long and admirable paper," (which is printed at length in the recent editions of Southey's biography,) had "convinced him that he was mistaken" in charging Wesley with personal ambition. The date of this letter was 17th August, 1835. He was at that time making some preparations for a new edition of the "Life," and he stated that it was "his intention to incorporate in it whatever new information has been brought forward by subsequent biographers, and, of course to correct every error that had been pointed out, or that he himself could discover." More than twelve months later, in December, 1836, being on a visit to Penzance, he in substance repeated to the late Mr. Carne, of that town, the same statement which he had

\* "Wesley and his Times," vol. i. p. 634. Longmans & Co.

made in writing to Mr. Nichols. Unfortunately, the new edition was never prepared by him; and when, after his death, his son edited a new edition, in which Mr. Knox's observations were printed, as well as some notes by Coleridge, he seems to have been ignorant that his father had been convinced by Mr. Knox, or had intended to rectify his error. He leaves it, indeed, distinctly to be inferred that the text, as originally printed, expressed his father's settled judgment on the matter in question.

Southey's biography was published early in 1820. Before the end of the same year Mr. Watson published his "Observations." It was not, however, until 1825 that the Methodists themselves put forth a new Life of their founder, such as might be regarded as a corrective to that of Southey. This was the Rev. H. Moore's "Life," in two volumes, published at the Conference Office. Mr. Moore was one of Wesley's trustees, the other two being Dr. Coke and the physician, Dr. Whitehead. Of these the last had got hold, in the first instance, of Wesley's papers, and had published, very unfairly, by means of these, a separate and an *ex-parte* life of Wesley, as regarded chiefly from the point of view of an English Churchman, although

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Whitehead himself was in principle a thorough Dissenter. To anticipate this publication, the other two trustees, by the help of Wesley's own publications, and of such papers as they were able to command the use of, published very hastily a joint life of Wesley. Malice, however, had been beforehand, and Hampson's "Life" (Hampson had formerly been a Methodist preacher, but was then a clergyman of the Church of England) had been published even earlier than that by Coke and Moore. The latter, though it sold largely, was too hurried a composition (to a large extent, indeed, it was a mere compilation) to hold its rank as a biography of Wesley. Moore's "Life," published in 1825, was more carefully prepared and fuller than either of its Methodist predecessors, and was intended to serve as an antidote both to Whitehead's and to Southey's "Life." It was far, however, from being really adequate to the claims of Wesley's history, notwithstanding its genuine interest and its sterling value. It never for a moment was likely to supersede that of Southey with the general reading world. Watson, at the request of the Conference, undertook to prepare, and published in the year 1831, a short Life of Wesley for popular use and extensive circulation. But Watson was in

failing health, and greatly over-worked. His little volume is valuable for its observations on certain points especially connected with the relations between Wesley and the Church of England; but, regarded as a consecutive biography, it was altogether too slight, and left far too many blanks in the narrative. It was far from being even a tolerably complete epitome of Wesley's crowded and momentous history. In these respects it is greatly inferior to the French Methodist biography of Wesley (by Mr. Lelièvre), which is a fresh, original and admirably reduced and proportioned epitome of the Life of Wesley.\*

Since Watson's "Life of Wesley," no English biography of the founder of Methodism had been published until the Rev. Luke Tyerman recently published his elaborate work. The first volume of Dr. Smith's History of Methodism was, however, virtually a biography of Wesley, for the most part correct and judicious, although slight and incomplete. Though slight, it contributed some new and important information on the subject. The first volume of Dr. Stevens's able "History of Methodism "

\* John Wesley : his Life and Work." By the Rev. Matthew Lelièvre. Translated from the French, by the Rev. A. J. French. Published at the Wesleyan Conference Office, London.

furnished a fuller and more vivid account of the chief figure among the leaders of Methodism. It was not, however, and could not be, a complete biography, nor did it stand apart. It was intermingled with the sketches and episodes of an eloquent and stirring history. The *Life of Wesley* was but the chief among several biographical lines of narrative which were interwoven in that history.

Southey's "*Life*" was very likely to suggest the history and character of Wesley as a theme for philosophical students of religious movements and ecclesiastical history. It was not, however, till thirty years after the first publication of his work that the first essay on Wesley, in a separate volume, made its appearance. This was by Isaac Taylor, and was entitled "*Wesley and Methodism*." The author of *Essays on Enthusiasm*, on *Fanaticism*, on *Spiritual Despotism*, on *Ignatius Loyola*, could hardly have refrained from working out a study in his own line of composition on the character and life of Wesley. Taylor's "*Wesley and Methodism*" is not less faulty than might have been expected from such a writer, but it possesses at the same time considerable merits, and some parts of it are written in Taylor's best manner. Dr. Dobbin, somewhere near the

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same time, published a warmly appreciative sketch of Wesley. A few years earlier, the late Dr. James Hamilton, in the "North British Review," had published an article on Wesley, which, although brilliantly written, and conceived in a kindly spirit, showed that the writer knew very little of the real character or of the labours of the founder of Methodism. After this period, nearly twenty years passed away before much was written again respecting Wesley. A few years ago, however, the gifted author of the "Schonberg-Cotta Family" series of stories, in her "Diary of Mrs. Kitty Trevelyan," brought the life of early Methodism, according to her conception, vividly before a large circle of readers. Meanwhile, the public interest in Wesley, and in the history and position of Methodism, was at once shown and stimulated in England by discussions, year after year, in Convocation; by those reports of the proceedings of the annual Wesleyan Conferences which, within the last few years, have become a striking feature in the leading newspapers of the country, both metropolitan and provincial; by discussions relating to Methodism in clerical meetings; by correspondence in the religious newspapers; by sundry letters in the public journals,



and by pamphlets relating to the subject, and chiefly bearing upon the question of reunion with the Church of England; and by certain tracts which are extensively circulated by clergymen of the Church of England. Within the last fourteen or fifteen years two articles on the relations between Wesleyan Methodism and the Church of England have been published in the "London Quarterly Review,"—the former from the pen of Rev. W. Arthur; the latter, which has been since published in a separate form, by myself. The public mind in England has thus, within the last few years, become much more widely interested, and somewhat better informed, respecting Wesley and his work than formerly. Doubtless, also, the publication (in thirteen volumes), under the able editorship of Dr. Osborn, of the Richmond Theological Institution, of the whole of the Wesley poetry, by which, for the first time, the world has been made aware of the wealth and variety, as well as the intensity and brilliancy, of the poetic power with which the two brothers, but especially Charles, were endowed, has contributed to the general feeling of interest with which the career of the Wesleys is now regarded—of Charles, as the Methodist poet, and otherwise his

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brother's faithful coadjutor; of John Wesley, as the leading mind, whose character and convictions gave law to the whole Wesleyan movement. One further element I must name as contributing largely to the recent growth of interest in Wesley and Methodism; it is that which, indeed, has been already in part intimated in my reference to the space recently accorded to the Wesleyan Conference in the public papers—I mean the manifest, and the manifestly growing, power of Methodism. With this element in the case, the extension of the franchise, the spread of anti-State-Church principles, and the precedent, as many regard it, of the Irish Church disestablishment, distinctly connect themselves.

It is no wonder, accordingly, if Mrs. Oliphant, in her series of papers in "Blackwood's Magazine" for 1870, concerning the England of the Eighteenth Century, found herself brought face to face with John Wesley as "The Reformer" of his age. Her paper is clever, frank, and genial, but, as was to be expected, full of misconceptions. Southey would seem to have been her one source and authority, and it is something if she detects some of his fundamental mistakes.

Since Mrs. Oliphant wrote, Miss Wedgwood has published her very candid and

thoughtful essay on Wesley. It is to be regretted that Miss Wedgwood had not read some of the most important authorities on her subject. She, also, seems to have relied chiefly on Southey. In her list of authorities we find Whitehead's "Life of Wesley," and that by Coke and Moore; but not the more authentic and important biography of 1825, by Moore alone; nor (very important for Miss Wedgwood's purpose in her study of Wesley) Watson's "Observations," nor Watson's "Life," (by no means unimportant,) nor Dr. Stevens's very able and valuable volume, the first of his "History of Methodism," nor the biography of Wesley, which constitutes the first volume of the late Dr. George Smith's "History of Methodism," (Vol. I, "Wesley and his Times,") nor even Isaac Taylor's "Wesley and Methodism," a book most germane to her purpose. Neither of the articles in the "London Quarterly" to which I have referred seems to have come in her way. If they had they might at least have cleared up some points of misconception or obscurity, or have served as an index to sources of information.

It is all the more satisfactory and noteworthy, however, on this account, that Miss Wedgwood, from her own independent study,

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has been enabled to refute the most fundamental errors in Southey's representation of Wesley's character. With a quiet grasp of the subject, with easy acuteness and insight, she disposes of the charge of ambition as easily as she exposes the inconsistent and untenable naturalism which lies at the basis of Southey's resolution of religious phenomena into their supposed constituents, and of most of his criticisms of Wesley's "credulity" and "enthusiasm." Her views, indeed, appear to be strongly tinged with Maurician mysticism, and she repeats, in substance, some of the criticisms on the evangelical Arminianism of Wesley which are contained in Coleridge's notes to Southey's biography. But her main lines of thought are admirably laid out; her grouping of facts is very skilful; her general handling of the subject is simple and masterly. It is to be regretted, indeed, that what we have is only a study of the man as he was when he first set forth on his evangelical work; or, at the utmost, of his moral and spiritual qualifications as a reformer, and of the position to which he advanced in the opening campaigns of his life's warfare: consequently the volume gives us the impression of being merely an introduction or a fragment. Wesley the

preacher is scarcely sketched at all; his intellectual characteristics as a thinker or writer are scarcely touched upon; his evangelical itinerancy is not represented to our view; his ripe manhood and his old age are passed by; of the organization and the widespread work and influence of his later years next to nothing is said, except only so far as relates to the American ordinations. In short, just as misconceptions have been cleared away, as his position has been distinctly defined, as the nature of his work in general has been explained, and its need and vast importance been established; just when his disinterestedness, his magnanimity, his bravery and gentleness in peril and in controversy have been beautifully shown; just as the general characteristics of his mission, his purpose, his faith, have been set forth; and we are waiting to see what are his actual powers for work and service, for preaching and counselling, for moulding the faith and the theology of a community, for saturating a nation with his influence, for consolidating and governing a Christian Church or family of Churches, we find that the essay breaks off and all is over. Perhaps Miss Wedgwood acted wisely; perhaps she knew best her own compass of power; but we confess

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to have experienced a feeling of disappointment.

Miss Wedgwood has admirably delineated the circumstances which surrounded Wesley at the beginning of his work ; and she has effectually refuted Southey's errors as to his character and motives ; but the living man himself, as preacher, as ruler, as companion or friend, she has left quite in the shadow. She has done justice to the living Wesley only as a controversialist. Indeed, it is plain that she has, so far as she has conceived his living and social humanity at all, in part, at least, misconceived it. She can appreciate the character of his writing, so far as she has studied it, and has also fine glimpses of insight into his public character and his gifts as a ruler ; but of Wesley as a friend and companion she evidently has no sort of just conception ; otherwise she would not have characterized as devoid of all sense of humour one of the pleasantest and brightest of men, of whose remarkable vein of humour, indeed she must have read some instances in Southey's "Life," and would have found others in Stevens's "History ;" neither would she, notwithstanding the apparent inhumanness of Wesley's school arrangements at Kingswood, and the reticence as to domestic details in his

letters, of which his brother Charles pleasantly complained in their college days, have really concluded that Wesley was defective in human sympathy, had she mastered the details of his many-sided life and character. Wesley, as will presently be shown, was, perhaps, as susceptible a man in regard to all the charms and attractions of social character and intercourse, especially in the case of women, as can easily be found among the saints of history.

But the most elaborate work which has appeared on Wesley is the new "Life," in three volumes, from the pen of the Rev. Luke Tyerman, to which I have referred. This is a work of voluminous dimensions, and one which embodies the results of very great research, the fruit of years of industrious reading and collection. Mr. Tyerman prepared himself for his work by writing his biography of the father of the Wesleys, Samuel Wesley, the rector of Epworth. He seems also to have collected and studied—or at least to have carefully read, if he was not able to purchase—almost every book, pamphlet, broadsheet, and periodical, in which there is any reference whatever to Wesley: so that he writes with hitherto unequalled fulness of material and knowledge so far as

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respects the facts of Wesley's life. Being thus furnished and prepared, he has set himself to search out and set forth in order the whole history of Wesley from his cradle to his grave. His boyhood, so far as any thing can be learned about it; his school and college life; his home relations; his early personal friends, including not only university chums but well-beloved ladies; his religious history, minutely traced in all its stages, especially his changes of opinion and feeling as these gradually declared themselves,—until in the end a complete revolution had been consummated, and the academical High-Churchman had become the father of the Methodist revival and transformation; his preachings and journeyings; his organizations, his controversies, the persecutions he endured, the slanders, in full tale and in all their baseless enormity, which were continually invented and circulated against him, however miserable and short-lived such slanders may have been; his love-affairs and his married life; his almost innumerable publications; his Conferences and his helpers, ordained and unordained; his “ordinations” and his relations with the Church of England; his co-operation and his disagreements with the Moravians, with Whitefield, and “the Countess;” his



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loving concord and co-working, and his no less loving differences and contentions, with his Church-satirising but Church-idea-loving brother Charles; the peaceful labours and the wide-spread love and honour which marked the protracted years of his wonderful old age: all these matters, and a world of things besides, belonging to the infinitely busy and varied life of Wesley, Mr. Tyerman has made known to the world in these large and closely-printed volumes. The world, by the help of Mr. Tyerman, may now know all about John Wesley; may know much more, indeed, about the mere facts and consecutive history of his life, in its various fields and departments, than was ever known of him in his life-time by his closest friends. The record may be read and pondered in all its breadth, and from beginning to end. We may study the man as he hardly could have studied himself.

We are bound to admit, moreover, that Mr. Tyerman has shown no indulgence to his hero. Cromwell enjoined on the courtly portrait-painter to be sure to paint in all the warts there were upon his face. Mr. Tyerman appears rather to have been on the look-out for warts, and occasionally, as it seems to us, has magnified a mole into a wart, if he has not sometimes, looking through his

microscope with broken light, fancied he saw an unevenness and blemish where in reality there was none. The severe and Rhadamanthine judgment which Mr. Tyerman has exercised in regard to the pre-eminent son is the more remarkable because he went to the other extreme in writing the life of the father. On that old soldier's face there were warts not a few, and of no small size. But Mr. Tyerman could hardly see any. To him the rector of Epworth was an altogether noble and comely-seeming character, with a few venial infirmities, but no faults of any serious account; he was not merely a good and able and worthy man, although somewhat rugged in natural disposition and time-serving in professions and policy—to Mr. Tyerman's eye he was a truly great man, a great and good man; he was a high poetic genius, a man of a brave and lofty spirit, a great sufferer, a great hero, and a great saint. What Frederick the Great is to Carlyle, Samuel Wesley of Epworth is to Mr. Tyerman; and, according to his ability, he has effected for Samuel Wesley a transformation similar in character to that which the rugged Scotch philosopher has effected for the harsh and distempered Prussian king. And now, having been so indulgent in the

case of the father, Mr. Tyerman has set himself to be severely faithful in the case of the son, pleasant and blessed a man as that son undeniably was.

Perhaps it is as well that it should be so. At all events, we may perhaps account for the different treatment which the biographer has bestowed on the two characters. The Wesley father had suffered much, had shown much patience and bravery of spirit, and had been undervalued, as Mr. Tyerman thought, and left more in the background than such a father of such a family—and in particular of such sons—should have been. There was a great deal, too, that was picturesque in the history and the situation of the forlorn, persecuted, unbusiness-like, and weather-beaten rector. Here was a temptation to an author—to repair an old injustice, to bring out a striking figure into light, to disinter a hero. As to the son, the case is different. Mr. Tyerman has passed his life among those who almost worship the memory of John Wesley; many of whom think him absolute perfection, and cherish toward him a blind and unintelligent admiration. Probably he himself at one time shared strongly in these feelings. Research has shown Mr. Tyerman that the

popular conceptions of Wesley are to some extent mistaken. In applying his research, moreover, to point after point in Wesley's life, he has discovered what—as seen through his lens—look like considerable faults, although, when the natural eye looks at the whole character, they fade away into almost imperceptible foibles, or are seen to be, in reality, points of excellence. Here, then, are discoveries, which the truth-loving biographer deems it necessary to point out; here are popular errors which it is his stern duty, as an historian, to correct. Chivalry, sustained by fact, as he fancied, prompted Mr. Tyerman to make a hero of the father; public fidelity seemed to require that he should enlighten, as to certain points, the blind worshippers of the son.

Nor must we deny that it was Mr. Tyerman's duty to be rigidly faithful in his history of John Wesley, and this all the more because he is himself a Methodist. We are bound to repudiate altogether the maxim, as applied to such a case, that he ought, as one of Wesley's followers, to

"Be to his faults a little blind,  
Be to his virtues very kind."

The sanctity of truth—historical truth—is a

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holier and more venerable thing than even the reputation of John Wesley. Nor should we withhold from the biographer our admiration for the courage and fidelity with which, according to his own conceptions of truth, he has done his work. Moreover, as I have intimated, his rugged fidelity has, at least in one way, done good. No one can read this Wesleyan life of Wesley without feeling certain that the whole of Wesley's life, including whatever might have appeared to bear an unfavourable construction, and including all the scandals which were circulated respecting him by his meanest and most malignant foes, is brought fully out to view, and that, if the biographer has not "set down aught in malice," he has, on the other hand, "extenuated" nothing. Whatever he knew of to tell is told; whatever might at any time have been suspected, or scandalously alleged, that is told too. The worst possible is indicated as to Wesley. And the result is, a character with as much of goodness in it and as little alloy of evil as could well have been conceived; the character of a man absolutely free from meanness, from malice, from any standing anger or resentment; who, if he now and then went wrong, did so from the sanguine imprudences of a generous and susceptible nature, or, in one or

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two cases in the course of half-a-century, from the momentary irritation which a thwarted chief might be apt to feel ; but whose whole life was one of unremitting self-denial and unresting labour for the good of others. Such a character, so revealed and established, comes out most impressively from Mr. Tyerman's biography.

Still, I cannot but add that, in my judgment, Mr. Tyerman has overdone his fidelity. He almost seems to have made it his rule to take the worst construction which, with any thing like probability, could be put upon Wesley's conduct. In the case of a charge or prejudice against Wesley, he often gives the benefit of any doubt, as it seems to us, not to the accused, but to the accuser. Considering who and what Wesley was, and what his antecedents and independent character must be admitted to have been, this appears to be peculiarly unfair. Besides which, there is a tone in his dealing with Wesley which fairly astonishes one at times. Mr. Tyerman does not merely sum up in phrase of precise accuracy just what happened, and leave his readers to draw their conclusions : he censures, he pronounces, he condemns ; and this, too, in a tone of harshness, in some instances, and of lofty decision, as if he were Wesley's

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superior and judge. I believe that Macaulay—it is perfectly certain that Southey—would never have ventured in so absolute, unceremonious, dictatorial a style to pronounce censure on John Wesley. They would have felt their own inferiority to him; that, if he sometimes erred, he was at least a good and great man, a venerable saint, as to whom they could not venture to pronounce an unfavourable judgment, even in individual acts of his life, without modesty and self-restraint—without what the Romans would have called *verecundia*. Mr. Tyerman has not been restrained by any such diffidence. At times his mere *ipse dixit*, without even the formality of any attempt to weigh evidence or investigate the matter, pronounces at once sharply and shortly the folly or the wrong-doing of Wesley.

Nor does it ever seem to have occurred to Mr. Tyerman that perhaps Wesley and he regarded certain questions from different points of view; that he ought to have tried fully to master Wesley's own way of thinking and of regarding the matter in hand; and that, after all, from some point of view less conventional and more really true than his own, things which seem to his prejudices to be wrong might turn out to be right. Considering that Wesley was a man of far more

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thought than most of us—who had seen much more of life than any of us—it is possible that he might have had so much to say for his own way of thinking and acting, even when it seems to be directly in opposition to some current notions of to-day, as at least to warrant arrest of judgment in the case. Mr. Tyerman appears incapable of entering sympathetically into the mind and idiosyncrasy of Wesley. He is not in sympathy with him; and yet does not appear to feel that this is the case, or even that such sympathy is necessary in order to enable him to write the life of Wesley. He judges merely and unhesitatingly by his own lights and his own instincts. Those instincts, at least in some cases, I am bold to regard as mere conventional prejudices, and am prepared to vindicate Wesley just where and wherefore his biographer condemns him.\*

But, indeed, nothing is more evident than that Mr. Tyerman is deficient in that faculty of dramatic sympathy and insight, without which it is impossible for any man to understand, much less to write, the life of another

\* The contrast in tone between Mr. Tyerman's treatment of Wesley and his manner of judging him, and the manner in which genial outsiders write of him, may be understood by reference to the article on "Wesley and Wesleyanism" in the "British Quarterly" for October, 1871.



man, especially of a unique and wonderful man. He misunderstood the father, painting him after his own heart merely, but not as the facts, properly interpreted in a spirit of insight, really present him to our view: he painted a man he could understand and admire, but it was not the rector. In that case the facts were unconsciously warped to suit the sympathetic conception of the biographer; in the case of the son, he generally sticks to the facts in their mere outside aspect, but often he cannot get behind them—cannot see their real meaning. In neither case have the facts helped him to a true and real conception of the life and character which lay beneath them.

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## PART II.

### *WESLEY'S CHARACTER AND OPINIONS IN HIS EARLIER LIFE, TO THE PERIOD OF HIS EVANGELICAL CONVERSION.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### HIS BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

MY chief object, in this part of my study, will be to exhibit some points of Wesley's history, and some aspects of his character up to the time of his final and full spiritual change, which hitherto seem to have escaped recognition. Merely reminding my readers, therefore, that he was born in 1703, I pass over the circumstances of his early years. Epworth and its parsonage, with the rugged and granitic father, the episcopal mother, and the brilliant throng of daughters, I must not attempt to describe. I must also pass over the "fire" at the parsonage, and even "old Jeffrey," that inexplicable visitation; and, only to note two points, must I stay for an instant at the Charterhouse School. Wesley, it is well known, was educated

there; and there endured great hardships and even cruel oppressions—small and delicately-formed boy as he was—from some of the senior scholars, especially during his service as “fag.” It appears that there was a tradition in the school that Wesley was accustomed, when himself a senior, to associate with his juniors. This is likely enough to have been true, considering what the manners and morals of the school were at that time. He might do some good to his juniors, and might, perhaps, among them, avoid evil communications.

As for the story related by Mr. Tyerman, that when Mr. Tooke, his master, asked him the reason for his so associating, he answered,

“Better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven,”

I simply regard it as an invention and embellishment, added by his school-fellows, *more puerorum*, to amplify and round off the tradition and the story. I feel sure, besides, that Wesley, if he had quoted Milton at all, would have quoted him accurately. It is said that Wesley was accustomed to “harangue” his juniors, it is likely enough that he did, more or less, and expound and hold forth to them on interesting matters of routine and duty, or possibly on themes of fancy. He was a quick boy, with

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the gift of a teacher, and not wanting in the fancy of a poet.

But one remark made by Mr. Tyerman, as to his school-life at the Charterhouse, strikes me as singularly austere. It is the first instance of the austerity with which the biographer has treated Wesley throughout. Wesley, who, it must be remembered, entered the Charterhouse at the age of ten, is said, with solemn emphasis, there to have "lost the religion which had marked his character from the days of infancy." He is himself quoted to the effect that at school he was "negligent of outward duties, and continually guilty of outward sins." And on the strength of this confession his biographer says: "Terrible is the danger when a child leaves a pious home for a public school. *John Wesley entered the Charterhouse a saint, and left it a sinner.*" That is to say, he entered it a saint of ten years old, and left it a sinner of seventeen.

Now, I emphatically agree that the danger is very great indeed which attends a child leaving a simple, pious home to enter upon a public school. The wickedness of public schools has always been proverbial. But I think the instance of Wesley is by no means a strong one to cite in illustration of the point. I hardly know how adequately to interpret

the saying that Wesley at ten was "a saint," or to understand the contrast between the saint-child of ten and the sinner-youth of seventeen. But it is well to observe in what sense Wesley was "a sinner" in his teens. He, who himself made the confession of his religious failures, has also taught us how to understand and qualify them. He was negligent and careless, and he was guilty of what he knew to be outward sins; but yet such sins, he tells us in the same context, were "not scandalous in the eye of the world." He adds, moreover: "However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was: 1. Not being so bad as other people; 2. Having still a kindness for religion; and, 3. Reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers."

Such is the sentence which Wesley, the sternest of judges in such a case, pronounced on his own moral and religious state when he was at the Charterhouse—a sentence pronounced, it must be remembered, at a time when all Wesley's judgments as to such cases were far more severe than they became as revised, after many years' experience, in his later life. It was in 1738 that he so wrote of himself. It is clear that Wesley never lost,

even at the Charterhouse, a tender respect for religion, the fear of God, and the form of Christian propriety. That he was at this time unconverted there can be no doubt; but when Mr. Tyerman, with such awful emphasis, tells us that, having gone to the Charterhouse a "saint"-child at ten years of age, he left it "a sinner" at seventeen, he uses language which can scarcely fail to convey an altogether exaggerated impression as to the character of his moral and spiritual faults and failings. Nor do I think such unqualified language is consistent with the account he had given on a former page of young Wesley's behaviour at the Charterhouse.

Isaac Taylor, in his work on "Wesley and Methodism," says, with reference to the privations and oppressions which Wesley endured at school, that "he learned as a boy, to suffer wrongfully with cheerful patience, and to conform himself to cruel despotisms without acquiring either the slave's temper or the despot's." Mr. Tyerman substantially adopts this language into his text as his own description of how Wesley fared and did at the Charterhouse, (p. 20.) But, for my part, I cannot help thinking that not a little grace must have been still working in the soul of the brave and patient boy, to enable him to

behave as he did. Wesley must have carried a heart not only bright and hopeful, but forgiving; not only elastic and vigorous, but patient and generous; or he could not have looked back in after days on his six or seven years at the Charterhouse—as we know that he did look back—not only without bitterness, but with pleasure, and have retained as Southey says, so great a predilection for the place, that, on his annual visits to London, he made it his custom to walk through the scene of his school-boy years.

One consequence of his school-experience I may note in passing. There can be no doubt that what he saw and experienced of the coarse and wicked horse-play of a great school had much to do with the regulations which he made long afterward for Kingswood School, forbidding all play, and permitting only of walks and garden-work by way of exercise and recreation. It was no slight evidence, let me here subjoin, of at least the powerful restraining influence of religion, that Wesley passed through such an ordeal as his six or seven years' residence at the Charterhouse without contracting any taint of vice.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE COLLEGIAN AT OXFORD.

LET us linger awhile with Wesley at Oxford—which University he entered, as scholar of Christ Church College, in 1720—not so much that we may review at any length his course and experience there, as that we may observe what manner of person he was—first, as a collegian, companion, and friend; next, as a theological student and Churchman; and, in both respects, as a living and moving man, full of power over those who came near him.

When Wesley went to Oxford at seventeen he was a gay, sprightly, and virtuous youth, full of good classics, and also with some knowledge of Hebrew, which he had begun to learn under his brother Samuel during the short interval, apparently, between leaving the Charterhouse and gaining his scholarship at Christ Church. He was moral and church-going; according to his own testimony, he read the Scriptures and religious books, especially commentaries; but he was destitute of any true apprehension of spiritual religion: he was, in fact, a devout, yet half-worldly,



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taken his father's reproof somewhat amiss at first, but had latterly expressed himself in his letters in a way which satisfied his father. The father had accordingly relented, as the letter shows. Mr. Tyerman's commentary on this and the brief preceding note is altogether in an exaggerated tone of austerity. He writes as if such letters "cast shadows on the character" of young Wesley; he declares, quite unwarrantably, that, from the age of eleven to twenty-two, Wesley was, "by his own confession, an habitual, if not profane and flagrant, sinner," and that he "thoughtlessly contracted debts greater than he had means to pay." There is no evidence whatever to justify such language as this. Wesley seems always to have kept at a remote distance from anything like "profane and flagrant sin;" he was "a sinner," as moral and virtuous youths are sinners, but only so; and if he could not make ends meet on £40 a year, there is no evidence whatever that he "thoughtlessly contracted debts." His sister Emilia, writing to him a few months later, said, no doubt most truly: "I know you are a young man encompassed with difficulties, and have passed through many hardships already, and probably must through many more before you are easy in the world;" she adds, also—poor,

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half-clad girl!—a noticeable remark : ‘I know not when we have had so good a year, both at Wroote and at Epworth, as this year : but, instead of saving any thing to clothe my sister or myself, we are just where we were. . . . One thing I warn you of—let not my giving you this account be any hindrance to your affairs. If you want assistance in any case, my father is as able to give it now as at any time these last ten years ; nor shall we be ever the poorer for it.’ \*

It is evident that the sister’s sympathies were heartily with her brother. There is, in truth, no foundation whatever for imputing to John Wesley, in his earlier years at Oxford, improvidence or unthrift. I take it for granted that he never incurred a serious expense, unless sometimes to purchase a book which appeared to be needful to his success as a student. That he had any extravagant habits or tendencies whatever, there is not the least reason to suppose. His mother did, indeed, urge him gently to try to save probably because the rector would have her put in an admonition to that effect ; but she never approaches the tone of censure in writing to her son. And if for once she had seemed to incline that way, wanting as she

\* Tyerman, vol. i, p. 33.

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was, for herself and her family, almost the necessaries of life, and not understanding fully a collegian's necessities, it would have been no great wonder. But there is no such tone in her correspondence. Her loving son had talked of trying to save a little that he might be able to visit his family; she gently reminds him that the payment of his debts was the first thing to be thought of, but expresses, at the same time, the hope that she may be able to bear his charges home. "I am not without hope," she says in the letter from which I have lately quoted a few words, "of meeting you next summer," (in London.) "If you then be willing to accompany me to Wroote, I shall bear your charges as God shall enable me."

To this subject of young Wesley's faults and failings Mr. Tyerman gives a whole paragraph—a very emphatic, and not a very short, paragraph. And yet, in the very next paragraph, and within some half-dozen lines of saying that Wesley "had need to repent in dust and ashes" for his sins—for the sins in particular, and among the rest, of extravagance and thoughtless improvidence, by which he had brought additional burdens on his poor, embarrassed, and struggling father, Mr. Tyerman goes on to say that "Wesley was far too

noble and too high-principled to seek admission into the Christian ministry "merely as a livelihood. Surely, if he had been improvident, extravagant, inconsiderate of his father's circumstances, "an habitual, if not profane and flagrant, sinner," "without religious sentiments, and without a religious aim," as Mr. Tyerman tells us he was, it would not have been by any means incredible that when he went to college, it might have been his intention to enter the Church as a profession, without any high religious motive. I do not, in the least, wish to intimate that it was so; but it is not consistent, on the one hand, to place John Wesley so low in respect of religion, if not also of morality, and, on the other hand, to speak of him as so noble and so high-principled a young man.

Leaving this point, however, let us note the indications of young Wesley's character in the earlier years of his college life which are afforded by the family correspondence with which Mr. Tyerman enriches his first chapter, "Wesley at Home, at School, and at College." No one can read this correspondence without becoming aware that "Jacky"—the very name, "Jacky," might, indeed, be sufficient to settle that question—was by no means the semi-stoical person,

destitute of homely warmth and kindliness, and of natural interest and concern about the little matters of family life, which some of his critics—which even a writer of such discrimination and insight as Miss Wedgwood—would seem to have supposed him to be. If at a later period of his life, when absorbed and oppressed by the care of the religious movement at Oxford, he forgot, on his arrival from a visit home, to tell his brother Charles of the details of the family circumstances, that must be attributed, not in the least to want of feeling for his parents and sisters, or lack of interest in all that really affected them, but to the weight and pressure at the moment of a most solemn religious undertaking and responsibility. How lovingly and generously he cared for his mother and sisters through life—with what depth and intensity, with what force of reason and fact, and of barely suppressed indignation, he vindicated himself, on one occasion, from a petulant and unwarrantable imputation to the contrary—the students of his life will hardly fail to remember.\* In his early days at Oxford he kept up very loving relations and correspondence with his sisters. “More than once,” as Mr. Tyer-

\* See his letter to his sister Emily, in Clarke's “Wesley Family,” p. 519, and in Mr. Tyerman, vol. i. pp. 424, 5.

man tells us, "when requesting that his sisters would write to him, he playfully remarks that, though he was so poor, he would be able to spare the postage for a letter now and then." And writing to his mother on the 1st of November, 1724, from Oxford, he says: "I should be exceedingly glad to keep up a correspondence with my sister Emily, if she were willing. I have writ once or twice to my sister Sukey, too, but have not had an answer either from her or my sister Hetty, from whom I have more than once desired the poem of 'The Dog.' I should be glad to hear how things go on at Wroote, which I now remember with more pleasure than Epworth; so true it is, at least in me, that the persons not the place, make home so pleasant." A sweeter, purer tone of writing than this we could hardly imagine. It will be observed that the family were now living, not at Epworth, but at Wroote, the living which his father held with Epworth, and that this was the reason of the turn in the last sentence. Wroote itself was a most uninviting place, very different from the pleasant and old-fashioned settledness of the town of Epworth, with its comfortable houses and goodly gardens. The letter closes by begging his mother's and his father's blessing on their

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“dutiful son.” It was five months later than the date of this letter that “Emilia Wesley” wrote the letter to her brother from which I have already quoted.

Poor Emilia, eldest of the gifted sisters! Mr. Kirk says of her, in his “Mother of the Wesleys:” “Her love for her mother was strong as death; and she regarded her brother John with a passionate fondness. Though so much younger than herself, she selected him as her ‘most intimate companion; her counselor in difficulties,’ to whom ‘her heart lay open at all times.’” Crossed in love, and for some reason not fully explained, but perhaps connected with her love affair, irritated against her father, her spirit chafed under the difficulties of her situation; but she bravely helped both her family and herself during the years of her earlier womanhood. She was known in her later years as Mrs. Harper, a widow, and died in the bosom of her brother’s Methodism, in her eightieth year. Poor Sukey, too, the second sister, beautiful, vivacious, and accomplished, but whose lot was far more troublous than that of Emily, though Emily’s was so far from an easy life. She was in the flower of her life when her brother referred to her in the letter which has been quoted. Some years later, after she had

married the wretched profligate Ellison, her youngest sister wrote of her: "Poor Sukey! she is very ill. People think she is going into a consumption. It would be well for her if she was where 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'" And again, poor Hetty! Her lot was as sad as that of her sister Ellison. The most gifted of all the sisters, to whom it was more natural to write in sweet verse than in prose—though her prose, like that of all the sisters, was excellent—her sad story has in part been told by Mr. Kirk in the interesting volume to which I have referred. Her husband was every way unsuitable for her—an ignorant, illiterate, and degraded plumber. Mehetabel (Hetty) Wesley, or Mrs. Wright, after a living martyrdom of some twenty years, died in 1750, leaving not a few beautiful verses behind her. To these and to all his sisters Wesley never failed to show himself an affectionate brother. How it is that there was no reference to his amiable, but deformed, sister Mary in the letter of Wesley I have quoted, it is not possible to guess. She became Mrs. Whitelamb—Whitelamb having been first her father's amanuensis, afterwards his curate, and finally, when he married, his successor in the small rectory of Wroote—and she died



in 1734, one year after her marriage, at the age of thirty-eight, having had, indeed, a short but not an unhappy life. Keziah, the remaining sister of Wesley, was, in 1724, only fourteen years old.

Mr. Badcock, in the "Westminster Magazine," gave a picture of Wesley as he was at Oxford in 1724, when he was about twenty-one years of age. "He appeared," we are told, "the very sensible and acute collegian; a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments." He was at this time a general favourite. But having taken his degree, and being in prospect of presently taking orders, a decided change began to come over his tone of thought and feeling. He became much more serious and thoughtful than he had been, and corresponded earnestly both with his father and his mother as to the motives which should govern him in seeking to take orders; as to the studies which he should pursue; and as to the principles and manner of life which should give character to one intending to enter the holy ministry. Mr. Tyerman gives the most important letters, and enables us to trace the formation of Wesley's principles. Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor, and William Law, as he himself has particularly described, were

his chief instructors at the first, and for a considerable period. The asceticism of the first, indeed, was always too sombre for him. But, on the whole, he was greatly moulded by their influence, and became eventually himself an ascetic, with a mystical bias, (due partly to Law,) and also an overpowering ritualistic tendency, but at all times free from sombreness of colouring or moroseness of temperament. Against Jeremy Taylor's gloomy and morbid teachings as to the necessity of perpetual, sorrowful uncertainty on the point of the penitent sinner's pardon and acceptance, Wesley's cheerful faith and good sense revolted from the first. Writing to his mother in 1725, he says: "If we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, (which He will not do unless we are regenerate,) certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then, undoubtedly, we are in this life of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this!" There, in 1725, we have already settled within Wesley's mind, notwithstanding his High-Church indoctrination from the writings of Taylor, one of the characteristic

doctrines of Methodism, namely, that of a present salvation from guilt and fear, through the indwelling of Christ. It is true, indeed, that as yet Wesley had not the experience and knowledge of evangelical faith and life which made the foundation of his special teaching in after life on the subject of conversion and the witness of the Spirit. But he had already taken the general position in opposition equally to Calvinism and to Carolan High Churchmanship indicated in the passage just quoted. It is clear, also, from the parenthesis, that as yet the modern Anglican doctrine of baptismal regeneration had not been embraced by him.

It was from the "Christian's Pattern" of Thomas à Kempis, and from Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," that Wesley learned the doctrine of entire Christian consecration and holiness which afterward developed into the Methodist doctrine of "Christian Perfection." "I saw," he says in a passage which Mr. Tyerman quotes, "that simplicity of intention and purity of affection—one design in all we speak and do, and one desire ruling all our tempers—are indeed the wings of the soul, without which she can never ascend to God. I sought after this from that hour." This was in 1725, and the lesson was learned from

the "Pattern." Again, he says, in reference to the effect of the "Holy Living and Dying"—  
"Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God—all my thoughts, and words, and actions—being thoroughly convinced there was no medium, but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God or myself, that is, the devil." Truly does Mr. Tyerman say, after quoting these passages, and more than we have cited—  
"Here, then, we have the turning point in Wesley's history. It was not until thirteen years after this that he received the consciousness of being saved through faith in Christ; but from this time his whole aim was to serve God and his fellow-creatures, and get safe to heaven."—Pp. 36, 37. Let it be noted, accordingly, that 1725 was a great era in Wesley's history. Furthermore, in the same year he and his mother—that remarkable woman was his chief theological tutor—settled between them the question of predestination in the sense in which Wesley always taught it. As to faith, however, Wesley still remained altogether beclouded. Faith, with him, at present seems to have meant little else than right opinion. No wonder, after wandering for so many years in the wilderness because misled by this natural and prevalent error, that in later life

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he waged war so sharply, so continually, so resolutely, against this error. As yet he had no glimmering of the truth that a true Christian faith is strictly personal, is "of the operation of the Holy Ghost," is a moral and spiritual affection and act, or habit of acting, of the highest significance and potency, rooting the soul in Christ and God, and including within itself implicitly the whole fruit of the Spirit of God.

Wesley was ordained deacon in September 1725, by Bishop Potter, and preached his first sermon at South Leigh, a small village near Witney. In March, 1726, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College. By this time his increasing strictness had begun to attract attention; but, as yet, no greater reproach than that of singular and somewhat excessive religiousness attached to him in the minds of any. No one regarded him as fanatical; most looked upon him with high respect as one of the most distinguished and conscientious, one of the most accomplished and able, men in the University. From the time of his receiving the Lincoln fellowship, however, he was to enter upon a new stage of his career. He himself has told us how he took occasion by his change of colleges to give a resolute, though not uncourteous, *cong  * to all his

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former acquaintances who were not as serious and as earnest as himself. From this time, accordingly, Wesley became a religious devotee, although he took no taint of sourness, and by no means lost all his smart pleasantry of speech. He was at this time, and indeed all his life, as his circumstances permitted, a very hard and very various student. Oriental languages, oratory and poetry, metaphysics, logic and ethics, as well as divinity, entered into his weekly plan of study. Eight months after his election to the fellowship he was appointed Greek Lecturer in his college, and Moderator of the Classes. His skill and readiness in logic, it is well known, were extraordinary. "Leisure and I," he said in a letter to his brother Samuel, written about this time, "have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged me." From the time of his receiving his first college-allowances as Fellow, Wesley's financial battle was over; and, exercising economy as rigid over his personal expenses afterward as in his greatest poverty before, he was able to assist his brother Samuel in helping their father, and to be, to the end of his life, a benefactor to his family. He never saved to enrich himself. The summer after

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his election he took a sort of holiday, for which he had been longing, and for which his parents and family had longed not less than he. He spent it at Epworth and Wroote, acting as his father's curate and pursuing his studies.

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### CHAPTER III.

JOHN WESLEY, MISS KIRKHAM, AND

MRS. PENDARVES.\*

IN 1727 we catch a very interesting glimpse of Wesley's relations with others beyond his own family. There resided at Stanton, in Gloucestershire, the Rev. Lionel Kirkham. This clergyman had (at least) two daughters and a son. Of the daughters, one, Sarah, had married the Rev. William Capoon, (or Chapone,) and remained, as his wife, at Stanton. She is often referred to in the "Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany," with whom she was on terms of intimate friendship, as a woman of remarkable talent; she appears also to have been very fond of theological discussions. Another (or the other) daughter, Betty, is referred to in a quotation I shall immediately give from a family letter. The brother was an intimate college friend of Wesley's, and became, a few years later, one of the original band of Methodists. Wesley had visited this family, and appears to have been a very welcome guest there. The brother was evidently very anxious that Wesley should become his brother-

\* Afterwards Mrs. Delany.



in-law, and Wesley appears to have been greatly impressed with the merits and charms of Miss Betty. In a letter from young Kirkham to Wesley, dated February, 1727, and which begins, "With familiarity I write, dear Jack"—a letter, I must say, so empty, although hearty, and so broadly rustic in tone, as to surprise us from a friend of Wesley's—I find the following passage:—

"Your most deserving, queer character; your worthy personal accomplishments; your noble endowments of mind; your little and handsome person; and your obliging and desirable conversation, have been the pleasing subject of our discourse for some pleasant hours. You have been often in the thoughts of M. B., [Miss Betty,] which I have curiously observed, when with her alone, by inward smiles and sighs, and abrupt expressions concerning you. Shall this suffice? I caught her, this morning, in a humble and devout posture on her knees. I am called to read a 'Spectator' to my sister Capoon. I long for the time when you are to supply father's absence. Keep your counsel, and burn this when perused," etc.

It is singular that such a letter as this was not burned by Wesley—very curious that it was preserved for a hundred and forty years

before it was published in the "Wesleyan Times." It opens the way, however, to a series of letters of the greatest and most curious interest, which reveal Wesley in a light altogether new, which show the workings of his mind, and even his style of writing, as no one could ever have expected to see them, utterly contradicting the idea that he was wanting in the softer and warmer emotions of our nature—an idea which has grown up from the singleness with which, for fifty years, he devoted himself to the intense practical work of an apostle. No greater mistake could there be than such an idea; and if, in his later life, there are appearances which seem to lend a countenance to it, the reason is that, in proportion to his natural susceptibility to the warm attraction of intimate and fond affections, was the rigidness of watchful suppression which he imposed upon his temperament when the solemn life-work which Providence had assigned to him demanded his undivided and unintermitted energies.

The correspondence to which I refer was not, however, between Wesley and Miss Betty Kirkham—the lady referred to in the extract just given—but between Wesley and an intimate friend of hers, known for three quarters of a century as a woman of high

accomplishments and of almost unequalled charms and attractions, who moved in the best society of the country, and was honoured for half a century and more with the intimate friendship and confidence of King George III. and his Queen. I refer to the famous Mrs. Delany, whose history is so well known from her "Life and Correspondence," by Lady Llanover.

Mary Granville, afterwards Mrs. Delany, was left a widow after her first marriage, early in 1725, being then twenty-four years of age. Her first husband's name was Pendarves. Her mother's house was near Gloucester, not far from Stanton, Gloucestershire, where Mr. Kirkham lived, and she had become very intimate with his daughters. One of these, as I have remarked, is often referred to in the "Life and Correspondence"—the "sister Capoon" of the foregoing extract—mother-in-law, in after years, of Mrs. Chapone, whose "Letters" were once so well known. The other is never once referred to, and does not appear to have been known to Lady Llanover, although her ladyship was a grand-niece (I believe) of Mrs. Delany, or, at all events, a descendant of her sister, Anne Granville. And yet this other, as appears from the correspondence to which we have referred, was a

most highly-valued friend of Mrs. Pendarves, (or Delany,) and a Christian of no ordinary character. It seems, indeed, as if all the religious correspondence and the religious life of this fascinating lady had vanished from her "Remains," so completely wanting are the traces of this life, at least in the earlier portion of it. And yet the evidence is before us, that the idol of the Court circle was much occupied, at least for considerable intervals, with religious thought and feeling, and that between her and John Wesley there was carried on a very remarkable correspondence, deeply coloured with religion.

What is more, it is evident that this lady succeeded to the place in Wesley's thoughts which had been occupied by Miss Betty Kirkham. The latter he would have married, if it had been possible; but some insurmountable obstacle—it may have been a stern parental decree,—made such a union impossible. Not concealing his deep sorrow at such a barrier to his tenderest and most treasured hopes from her friend and his new correspondent—frankly, indeed, avowing it throughout—Wesley would have had the dazzling, but most amiable, widow take her place, if she would but have inclined her ear and heart. She was evidently not insensible to his merits

nor to his admiration. But it was hardly likely at any time that she would have accepted the position of his wife. At all events, after several years of correspondence, a long visit to Ireland, with its new scenes, its fashionable absorption, its dissipating stimulants, interrupted the correspondence for some time. Then she made an attempt, with deep apologies, to renew it; but Wesley had escaped from the pleasing snare, and with stately but tender courtesy, in a final letter, bowed the charmer out of his circle.

It was the fashion, in those times, for friends to have fictitious names by which to address and speak of each other—names often borrowed from some romance of the time. Mrs. Pendarves' name, with many of her friends, was *Aspasia*; her sister Anne's was *Selina*. Miss Betty Kirkham's was *Varanese*. John Wesley's, in this correspondence, was *Cyrus*; his brother Charles's was *Araspes*. Lady Llanover prints letters in her volumes which mention *Cyrus*, but she had no suspicion that *Cyrus* was Wesley. What a striking mosaic relief would this correspondence have introduced into her first volume if she had only had the opportunity of printing it.

I have stated that *Varanese* was the fancy name of Betty Kirkham. As such it appears

in the quotations about to be given from the correspondence, sometimes being indicated under the initial V., sometimes as Var., and again as V<sup>nese</sup>.

This correspondence has never been published in its integrity, but considerable extracts from it will be found in the "Wesleyan Methodist Magazine" for 1863, at pp. 134—139, and 211—217, and Mr. Tyerman has printed some portions of it. By the kindness of my honoured friend, the late Rev. Dr. Hoole, I was favoured with the opportunity of consulting the whole, and using it for the purposes of this publication.

What strikes one as most remarkable in this correspondence is, the variation of character which the warm and tender admiration for such a woman as Mrs. Pendarves seems to work in Wesley. He, of course, had seen little of the world. His home was amid the uncultured rusticity of Epworth and Wroote. At college his means had not allowed him to mix with general society before his fellowship, and after his fellowship his seriousness had prevented his mingling with the fashionable. But at Stanton, at his friend Kirkham's home, he had, no doubt, been introduced to the Granville family. There he had met with Mrs. Pendarves, a brilliant lady of the Court,

familiar with all that rank and fashion could display, yet sweet and modest, intelligent and inquiring; as happy in country life as if she had never known a Court or shone in the assemblies of London; as if the assembly and the opera were altogether strange to her; and, above all, interested and concerned about matters of religious devotion and duty. It is no wonder if the young collegian, with a mind open to every charm of refinement and goodness, as well as to every grace of person, was altogether dazzled and subdued by such an apparition as that of Mrs. Pendarves in Stanton. Then she was affectionately and admiringly attached to the lady whom, above all others, he had esteemed and admired—to Betty Kirkham. The result was, that the young Oxford fellow, tutor and clergyman, linguist and wit, logician and theologian, student and devotee, sought and obtained permission to become a correspondent of the widow; in this respect more fortunate than any other gentleman of whom we have any information. But when he undertook to write to her, he seems to have been quite overset by the quality and accomplishments of the person to whom he had undertaken to write. In all other correspondence, before as well as after this period of his life, Wesley is

always clear, neat, and parsimonious of words; simple, chaste, and unaffected. In this correspondence, on the contrary, he is stilted, sentimental, I had almost said affected, certainly unreal, certainly at times fulsome, when he has to speak of the lady herself, or attempts to turn a compliment. One almost wonders how the lady, who never forgets herself, and whose style is always natural and proper, was able to bear the style in which he addressed her. It is only when a question of religious casuistry or of theology, of duty or of devotion, is to be dealt with, that Wesley is himself again; then, his style is singularly in contrast with what it is in respect to points of personality or of sentiment. His expressions of regard and admiration are as high-flown as if they belonged to a Spanish romance; his discussions are clear and close. It is hard to understand how the same man could be the writer of all.

I have said that the correspondence with Aspasia (Mrs. Pendarves) grew out of the relations between Wesley and Betty Kirkham, and that the fancy name of the latter was Varanese. This is shown by a letter to Wesley from his sister Martha, a sentence of which is quoted by Mr. Tyerman, and the date of which is five days later than that of



the one from Kirkham to Wesley from which I have quoted. "When I knew," says she, "that you were just returned from Worcester-shire, where, I suppose, you saw your Varanese, I then ceased to wonder at your silence, for the sight of such a woman, 'so known, so loved,' might well make you forget me." Mr. Tyerman, however, for once has fallen short in his research as to this case, for he says, "Nothing more is known of this incipient courtship;" and also, that "Wesley soon became far too much immersed in more serious things to have time to think of wooing." The correspondence with *Aspasia* shows that on Wesley's side, at least, there was no withdrawal from his passion for "Varanese;" that, years afterward, the attachment still continued very strong; that it was not his fault if it did not lead to a life-long union; and that he could and did find time, in the midst of his most engrossing engagements, for a correspondence with the woman of his choice.\*

\* In his "Oxford Methodists," p. 2, Mr. Tyerman has, in his notice of Robert Kirkham, tacitly recognised the truth of what is written above. He seems to show that Betsy Kirkham became Mrs. Wilson, and died in the summer of 1732. The question with which Mrs. Pendarves, in the letter which alludes to her death, and which is dated June 28, 1732, closes her reference to her case, shows that Mrs. Wilson must have been married some years. I should add here that the substance of this chapter was published several years ago in the "London Quarterly Review."

It seems to have been in the summer of 1730, three years and a half after the date of Robert Kirkham's letter to Wesley about his sister, while Mrs. Pendarves was spending some months in the country with her mother and sister, that Wesley first made her acquaintance; no doubt, at Stanton, at the Kirkhams'.

Wesley's first letter to her, accompanying some MS., which he had promised to send her, is dated August 14 of that year, and in this he refers to "his dear Varanese." It appears that some correspondence of hers was necessary in order to explain the MS., "the trifle," which he was sending. In reference to this he says: "While I was transcribing the letters, these last monuments of the goodness of my dear V., I could not hinder some sighs which, between grief and shame, would have their way. Not that I was so much pained at seeing my utmost efforts outdone by another's pen, but I could not, I ought not to, be unmoved when I observe how unworthy I am of that excellent means of improvement, etc. . . . I trust so unusual a blessing of Providence has not been utterly useless to me. To this I owe both the capacity and the occasion of feeling that soft emotion with which I glow even at the moment when I

consider myself as conversing with a kindred soul of my V."

In a later letter (September 14th) he says, "My dear V. informs me you are going yet farther from us, but cannot inform me how soon." On the 12th of October she, writing to him from Gloucester, speaks of "our inimitable dear V.," and longs for her ability to write on high and serious subjects. On the 19th of November, apologizing for her infrequent writing, she says, "I have not had time even to write to V." In a letter dated Innocents' Day following, "Cyrus" thus significantly expresses himself: "While I am reflecting on this, I can't but often observe with pleasure the great resemblance between the emotion I then feel and that with which my heart frequently overflowed in the beginning of my intercourse with our dear V. Yet is there a sort of soft melancholy mixed with it, when I perceive that I am making another avenue for grief—that I am laying open another part of my soul, at which the arrows of fortune may enter." There follows much more soft meandering around the same subject, and to a similar effect.

On the 11th January following he refers again to the advantage he has enjoyed in "the friendship of our V." Under date April 4,

following, Aspasia refers to "dear V.," and to being "denied the happiness and advantage of conversing with such a friend." And, a few days later, Cyrus, after referring to "dear V.," adds, most suggestively, "Why it is that I am not allowed a stricter intercourse with such a friend is a question I could never fully answer but by another: why is my intercourse with such a friend as Aspasia or Selina allowed?" Selina, I remark in passing, here as elsewhere in the correspondence, is decorously joined in society with Aspasia, as Araspes is with Cyrus.\* But this is a very transparent artifice of correspondence. So he desires, in another letter, to "shelter himself under the protection of V., and Aspasia and Selina." In the early summer of 1731, Wesley met V., somewhere on a visit, probably at Stanton, where he may have been over from Oxford "doing duty." He writes in regard to this visit to Aspasia as follows: "You will easily judge whether the remembrance of Aspasia made that entertainment in particular less agreeable which I enjoyed last week in the

\* For example: "The esteem of Araspes as well as Cyrus must ever attend both Aspasia and Selina." This is a P.S. to a letter from Cyrus. So the lady closes one of her letters thus: "Araspes may justly claim our service and esteem. Selina joins with Aspasia in being to Cyrus a

"Faithful and Obligated Friend."

almost uninterrupted conversation of dear V. "On this spot she sat," "along this path she walked," "here she showed that lovely instance of condescension," were reflections which, though extremely obvious, could not but be equally pleasing, and gave a new degree of beauty to the charming arbour, the fields, the meadows, and Horrel (?) itself." In her reply, she says: "I will not say I envied either Va. or Cyrus those moments they passed together; but happy should I have been to have shared them with you. How I please myself with the thought that I was not quite forgot at that interview. Perhaps I was wished for." In one place the passionate religious fervour of "Varanese" is shown by some words which Wesley quotes from her. "I do not wonder," he says, "that Aspasia is thus minded, any more than I did at the temper of dear V<sup>nese</sup>, under the sharpest pain that an embodied spirit can know. You will easily take knowledge of those words, if you have not heard them before: 'When I was in the greatest of my pains, if my strength would have allowed, I would gladly have run out into the streets to warn all I met that they should save themselves from pain sharper than mine.' " \*

\* From several references in the letters, it would appear that *Varanese* was by no means an habitual sufferer from illness or

Mrs. Pendarves was three years older than Wesley, and was, it is evident enough, regarded by her country friends as a sort of superior being. When she allowed the correspondence to begin, she probably had no idea that any warm affections would be stirred in the course of it. Wesley's earliest effusions, however, must have excited in her some suspicion as to how matters might turn; and, before the correspondence came to an end, it would seem that a tone of decidedly warmer, more natural, and more confidential friendship gave character to her letters. Her own religious sensibilities, besides, were more awakened; and, as she became more earnest and confidential, the power of Wesley's writing greatly grew. There can be no doubt that he did at one time cherish the aspiration that Mrs. Pendarves might join her lot with his. Her second husband was an Irish dean and divine, neither so well-born and bred nor so distinguished or useful a man as Wesley. But Wesley, wedded in 1732 to Mrs. Pendarves, might have become a very different man from what he did become. The follow-

pain, but enjoyed good ordinary health. The date of the letter last quoted is July 24th, 1731. A year later the lady—then, and also at the date of the letter quoted, Mrs. Wilson—had died altogether unexpectedly.

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ing passage in a long letter of Wesley's, dated July 24, 1731, is the nearest approach to a proposal of marriage contained in this correspondence. One broad hint has been quoted already.

“Is it no hurt to rob you of your time, for which there is no equivalent but eternity? on the use of every moment of which more than a world depends? to turn your very sweetness of temper against you? on this very account to encroach on you with so much cruelty? to force you to stand still so many hours, when you are most ardent to press forward? nay, to strike whole days out of your existence, while He that sitteth in heaven sees that all the kingdoms he hath made are vile compared to the worth of one particle of them! O God, hath thy wisdom prepared a remedy for every evil under the sun? and is there none for this? Must Aspasia ever submit to this insupportable misfortune? Every time a gay wretch wants to trifle away part of that invaluable treasure which Thou hast lent him, shall he force away a part of hers too? tear another star from her crown of glory? O, 'tis too much indeed! Surely there is a way to escape; the God whom you serve point it out to you!”

This was certainly opening the way skill-

fully and clearly for future advances, if due responsiveness had been shown by the lady. Her next letter, like the one preceding, is warmly kind and religiously earnest, by no means likely to discourage her correspondent. The one following, dated August 26, was written just on the eve of her journey and voyage to Ireland, and is still very kind, although, in the postscript, a stringent injunction is given, not the first she had given of the same kind in her postscripts, that all her letters should be burned, and that Cyrus should make use of no epithet before her name. This letter Wesley answered at length (September 28,) but received no reply. It can hardly be doubted that he wrote other letters afterwards not contained in this series, for he often wrote two letters for her one; and he was the more likely to do so as she was in Ireland, and as the direction in her last had been, "When you write to me, which I hope will be soon, direct your letter to my sister at Gloucester, and she will take care to convey it to me." But he still received no reply, though many months had passed away. Writing to her sister from Dublin the following spring, (March 11,) when nearly six months had passed away, she says :

"Cyrus by this time has blotted me out



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of his memory ; or, if he does remember me, it can only be to reproach me. What can I say *for* myself? What can I indeed say *to myself*, that have neglected so extraordinary a correspondent? I only am the sufferer, but I should be very sorry to have him think my silence proceeded from negligence. I declare 'tis want of time! Then there's poor Sally,\* too, who I think of every day, but cannot find a moment to tell her so; though soon I will endeavour to acquit myself in a proper manner to them both. I can't put myself into better hands for making an excuse for me than yours."†

Precisely twelve months later, in another letter to her sister, still from Ireland, she thus writes:

"As for the ridicule Cyrus has been exposed to, I do not at all wonder at it. Religion in its plainest dress suffers daily from the insolence and ignorance of the world; then how should that person escape who dares to appear openly in its cause? He will meet with all the mortification such rebels are able to give, which can be no other than that of finding them wilfully blinding themselves, and running headlong into the gulf of perdition—

\* Mrs. Chapone.

† Mrs. Delany's "Life and Correspondence," vol. i. p. 343.

a melancholy prospect for the honest-hearted man who earnestly desires the salvation of his fellow-creatures.”\*

It was not, however, till the summer of 1734, after an interval of nearly three years, that Mrs. Pendarves found time to write to her Oxford friend. By this time she had returned to England. Her first words indicate the feeling of the letter: “I never began a letter with so much confusion to anybody as I do this to Cyrus.” Her apologies are deep, and no doubt sincere. She had “at last broken through” the shame and reluctance to write which her long delay and neglect had produced, and was ready to “suffer any reproach rather than lose the advantage of Cyrus’s friendship.” Things, however, had gone too far; and the Cyrus of 1734 was a man of stronger character and more experience as well as of wider influence and of higher position as a spiritual teacher and leader, than the Cyrus of 1731. He will not renew the correspondence, and it may be doubted whether Cyrus and Aspasia ever met again.† His voyage to America soon intervened, and the whole colour of his life was completely changed.

\* Mrs. Delany’s “Life and Correspondence,” volume i. page 410.

† *Ibid.*, p. 175.

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The contrast between the beginning and the end of this correspondence is striking, and suggests that a great development had in the meantime taken place in Wesley's character. The first letter of all bears the signature "J. W.," and begins with the formal "Madam" of the time. It is tolerably sentimental and high-flown; but it is nothing to the second, which is addressed to "Aspasia," and which properly begins the Cyrus and Aspasia series. We transcribe a part of it, observing only that it is in reply to one from Aspasia, in which she acknowledged the MS. and letters he had sent her with his first. First he thanks her in elaborate circumlocution for her letter to him—a letter complimentary indeed, but destitute of any real matter or genuine thought whatever—and then proceeds:—

"It convinces me that it was possible I should enjoy a higher pleasure than even your conversation gave me. If your understanding could not appear in stronger light than when it brightened the dear hill, the fields, the harbour, I am now forced to confess your temper could. You even then showed but half your goodness.

"I spent some very agreeable moments last night in musing on this delightful subject,

and thinking to how little disadvantage Aspasia or Selina would have appeared even in that faint light which the moon, glimmering through the trees, poured on that part of our garden in which I was walking. How little would the eye of the mind that surveyed them have missed the absent sun! What darkness could have obscured gentleness, courtesy, humility — could have shaded the image of God! Sure none but that which shall never dare to approach them; none but vice, which shall ever be far away!”

Such compliments as these are singularly elaborate, and cumbrous, and obscure; but yet John Wesley, the master of simple manliness of style, wrote this and much more, in the following letters, not inferior in its kind. Such was Wesley in 1730 and 1731, as a “squire of dames,” and, in particular, as the fascinated admirer of Mrs. Pendarves. In one place he even goes so far as to place his orthodoxy in question when paying his excessive tribute to this lady. “Though,” he says, “I would fain be nearer you, though I do what I can (I fear not always) to overtake you, yet so hard is it to lay aside every weight—these follies do so easily beset me—that I find it will not be—the penitent cannot avoid being left behind by the innocent!”

The date of this notable sentiment is July 24, 1731, twelve months after the first acquaintance. It occurs in a long, earnest, religious, and, on the whole, impressive letter. The following sentiments in an earlier letter (October 24, 1730,) also appear to be very curious in an Oxford clergyman and fellow—an Oxford tutor and religious leader:—

“What the advantage of being present with you must be, may be easily conceived from what you do even when absent. To your good wishes I can’t but, in a great measure, impute it that we should exactly find our way through a country in which we were utter strangers, and for some miles without either human creature or day or moon or stars to direct us. By so many ties of interest, as well as gratitude, am I obliged, whether present or absent, to be, Madam, your most obliged and most obedient servant.”

Such was the style in which Wesley had paid his epistolary court to Mrs. Pendarves. Of course there was more substantial matter than such as I have quoted. Some of the letters discuss at length questions of religious duty and religious experience, and there is not a little earnest religious exhortation. But yet such writing as I have lately quoted occupies a large space in this correspondence.

The letter written by Wesley in 1734, in reply to Mrs. Pendarves' letter of profound apology, shows a higher style of writing, and much more dignity of character.

“Alas, Aspasia!” he rejoins, “are you indeed convinced that I can be of any service to you? I fear you have not sufficient ground for such a conviction. Experience has shown how much my power is short of my will. For some time I flattered myself with the pleasing hope; but I grew more and more ashamed of having indulged it. You need not the support of so weak a hand. How can I possibly think you do, (though that thought tries now and then to intrude itself still) since you have so long and resolutely thrust it from you? I dare not, therefore, blame you for so doing. Doubtless you acted upon cool reflection. You declined the trouble of writing, not because it was a trouble, but because it was a needless one. And if so, what injury have you done yourself? As for me, you do me no injury by your silence. It did, indeed, deprive me of much pleasure, and of a pleasure from which I ought to have received much improvement. But still, as it was one I had no title to but your goodness, to withdraw it was no injustice. I sincerely thank you for what is past; and may the God of my salva-

tion return it sevenfold into your bosom ! And if ever you should please to add to those thousand obligations any new ones, I trust they shall neither be unrewarded by Him nor unworthily received by Aspasia's faithful friend and servant, Cyrus.—Araspes, too, hopes you will never have reason to tax him with ingratitude. Adieu ! ”

Mr. Tyerman (as I have intimated) misses the full meaning of this interesting and suggestive episode in Wesley's life. He quotes indeed, Aspasia's first letter in full, as published in the "Wesleyan Times" in 1866 ; and he adds the interesting fact that on the fly-leaf of that letter Selina added a P.S., informing Wesley that her sister was about to visit Bath, and intimating to him that he had best write to her to ascertain her movements ; telling him also that Varanese had sent him a letter by the carrier a fortnight before, and wished to know whether it had come safe to hand. But he quite misinterprets the latter part of the letter from Aspasia. Aspasia writes : " If you have any affairs that call you to Gloucester, don't forget that you have two pupils who are desirous of improving their understanding, and that friendship has already taught them to be, sir, your most sincere, humble servants. My companion joins me in

all I have said, as well as in service to Araspes." The "companion," Mr. Tyerman says, was probably Mrs. Granville, (with whom also Wesley corresponded,)\* or Sarah Kirkham. But there is no evidence that Wesley had any particular friendship with Sarah Kirkham, who had, indeed, for years, been Mrs. Capon, Capoon, or Chapone, and Mrs. Granville is clearly out of the question. The "companion" is evidently the other "pupil," and that other was "Aspasia's" sister "Selina."

I have dwelt thus at length upon this correspondence, not merely because of the curious interest which attaches to the letters, but because they reveal a background of natural character which enables us to see in a much truer light the matured, and in good part transformed, Wesley of later years. It reveals to us the extreme natural susceptibility of Wesley to whatever was graceful and amiable in woman, especially if united to mental vigour and moral excellence. He had been brought up in the society of clever and virtuous women, his sisters; and it seems as if he could at no time of his life dispense with

\* Mrs. Delany's "Life and Correspondence," vol. i. p. 269. The date of the one letter to Mrs. Granville, of which we have any knowledge, is "Lincoln College, December 12, 1730."



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the exquisite and stimulating pleasure which he found in female society and correspondence. He was naturally a woman-worshipper—at least, a worshipper of such women. An almost reverent courtesy, a warm but pure affection, a delicate but close familiarity, marked through life his relations with the good and gifted women—gifted they were, for the most part—with whom he maintained friendship and correspondence. If Miss Wedgwood had been aware of this fact, her estimate of Wesley's character would have been different at some points from that which she has given to the world.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### WESLEY'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AT OXFORD, 1731—1735.

I MUST not pass away from the subject of Mr. Wesley's correspondence with Mrs. Pendarves without saying a few words as to the light which the letters throw upon the stage of development at which Wesley had arrived in his doctrinal views at the time (1730—1731) when they were written. As we have only, besides, a somewhat insignificant sermon or two of this period from which to draw our inferences, they are, in this point of view, very welcome to the student of Wesley's character in its whole unfolding.

I may say, then, in general, that the theology of these letters is utterly unevangelical. There is in them very little savour of Christ's presence; there is absolutely nothing of the righteousness of faith. The way to holiness and happiness is the use of the "instituted" means; all these should be continually used—used to the full—because the more means are made use of, the more grace must needs come to the teach-

able and humble Christian who uses them. But of Christ and of faith there is nothing. A servile legalism—a plodding ritualism, which the performer must have continually felt to be in danger of degenerating into perfunctoriness—constitutes the whole “way of salvation.” Aspasia mentions a case of religious distress in a female friend of hers. Wesley recommends the diligent use of all the means of grace—the “instituted” means—as a remedy for her state. Aspasia rejoins that she had already tried these and was none the better, but rather the worse. Her spiritual adviser had no genuine remedy to prescribe for such a case as this. He was a “miserable comforter” and an ignorant physician. Cases of casuistry as to Sunday employments and some other matters Wesley discussed, and more or less resolved with no little skill. His view of religious consecration, too, was high. But of evangelical faith and experience he knew nothing. Further evidence as to Wesley’s theological views at this period of his life is afforded by several sermons which, although not printed at the time, were printed many years afterwards, at various times, in the “Methodist Magazine,” and of which some account is given by Mr. Tyerman. From these it appears that Wesley taught

between 1731 and 1734 a high doctrine of Christian holiness, both active and passive; that he taught the duty of at least weekly, if not also, when circumstances allowed, of daily communion; and that he taught the duty of confession as a preparation for the Communion; that he also would have had the wine in the Holy Communion mixed with water; but that he did not entertain any such view respecting the real and corporeal presence, in or under the sacramental elements, of the Incarnate Christ, whether by transubstantiation or consubstantiation, as is now taught by high Anglicans. On the point of confession, Mr. Tyerman quotes a very racy passage from a letter of Wesley's elder sister Emily, to whose love for her brother I have already referred:—

“To lay open the state of my soul to you, or any of our clergy, is what I have no inclination to do at present; and I believe I never shall. I shall not put my conscience under the direction of mortal man frail as myself. To my own Master I stand or fall. Nay, I scruple not to say that all such desire in you or any other ecclesiastic seems to me like Church tyranny, and assuming to yourselves a dominion over your fellow-creatures which was never designed you by God. . . . I further own that I do not hold frequent com-

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munion necessary to salvation, nor a means of Christian perfection. But do not mistake my meaning: I only think communing every Sunday, or very frequently, lessens our veneration for that sacred ordinance, and, consequently, our profiting by it.”\*

There speaks out the keen, strong sense of the eldest of the Wesley sisters, couched in the admirable English, pure, clear, and strong, which the whole family seem to have caught from their mother. Emily would not make a father-confessor of her younger brother or of any man. She had not only Puritan blood in her veins, but some of the Puritan spirit for her inheritance. Wesley himself, in a passage quoted by his biographer, has truly pointed out what were the essential defects of his theology and his preaching from 1725 onward, so long as he remained at Oxford: “From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed, it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of preaching the Gospel, taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance. From the year 1729 to 1734, laying a deeper foundation of repentance, I saw a little fruit. But it was

\* “Tyerman,” vol i, page 94.

only a little : and no wonder : for I did not preach faith in the blood of the covenant.”\*

Wesley, indeed, went to consult a new teacher, and entered upon a new phase in the formation of his theological views, in 1732 ; but the new teacher was not likely to enlighten his darkness on the points to which I have referred. He visited William Law in the year named, and, on his recommendation, read the “*Theologia Germanica*,” Tauler’s works, and other mystic writings. Thus was mysticism grafted on High-Churchmanship. Under the influence of Law, Wesley seems to have continued until after he went to America. It was in 1726 that Law published his “*Christian Perfection*” and “*Serious Call* ;” and it must have been about the year 1728 or 1729 that Wesley first read these fine devotional and practical books ; it was certainly before 1730.† When, in 1732, Wesley visited Law, the latter had just begun to be a student of the mystical writers. It appears to have been about two years later that Law entered upon his course of decided deterioration and increasing confusion by becoming addicted to the study of Behmen.

In one respect, Law’s influence was antagonistic to the errors of externalism—the servile

\* “*Wesley’s Works*, vol. viii. p. 450.

† *Wesley’s “Works,”* vol. iii. p. 71.

devotion to means and rites—in which Wesley had been ensnared. “A contemplative man,” says Wesley, meaning, by this contemplative man, his instructor Law, “convinced me, still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and, in several conversations, instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God.” Nevertheless, the essential self-righteousness of mysticism, its real self-involution, its Christless and unevangelical character, are well shown by Wesley in his criticism of Law’s teaching, which immediately follows what we have just quoted. After saying that Law’s teachings, in reality, went to discourage him from doing outward works at all, (as is the inevitable tendency of all mysticism,) he adds: “He recommended (to supply what was wanting in them) mental prayer and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God, thus pursued, was as really my own righteousness as any I had before pursued under another name.”\*

\* “Works,” vol. iii. p. 72.

Law's semi-mysticism, however, was at least, under Providence, one means of delivering Wesley from the excessive traditionalism in which he had been entangled.

"I had," he himself says, "bent the bow too far in that direction, by making antiquity a co-ordinate, rather than a subordinate, rule with Scripture; by admitting several doubtful writings; by extending antiquity too far; by believing more practices to have been universal in the ancient Church than ever were so; by not considering that the decrees of a provincial synod could bind only that province, and the decrees of a general synod only those provinces whose representatives met therein; that most of those decrees were adapted to particular times and occasions, and consequently, when those occasions ceased, must cease to bind even those provinces." "These considerations," Wesley adds, "insensibly stole upon me as I grew acquainted with the mystic writers, whose noble descriptions of union with God, and internal religion, made everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid. But, in truth, they make good works appear so too."\*

When and how Wesley was brought finally to abandon mysticism does not appear to be

\* "Southey's Wesley," vol. i. page 94.



determinable with precision; but it would seem to have been during, or soon after, his voyage to Georgia. For some year or two previously, his opinions and practices must have been a singular amalgam of High-Church ritualism and of mysticism, in which the contemplative tendency and the strenuous and incessant devotion to rites or means and "good works," as the necessary vehicles and exercise of holiness, united in an asceticism at once severe and *suave*. Rapt abstraction, continual inward prayer, frequent ejaculations, constant attendance at prayers, (notwithstanding some temptations to omit the duty as merely an outward work,) daily communion, unceasing works of charity, and, in the intervals, close study in many branches of learning, English and foreign, but especially theology and ecclesiastical history and literature, would seem to have made up the life, from day to day, of Wesley and those original Methodists who placed themselves under his guidance.

"In this refined way," he says, "of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, (so zealously inculcated by the mystic writers,) I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein, till the time of my leaving England," in 1735. Some change, however, seems to have begun on shipboard,

where, he says, "I was again active in outward works." He also learned much from his Moravian companions on the voyage, although, he says, "I understood it not at the first; I was too learned and too wise." Nevertheless, he was more or less under the old influences all the time he remained in Georgia. "All the time I was at Savannah," he says, "I was thus beating the air. I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified."\*

In the other account we have from his own pen, written on his return to England, of the experiences through which he had passed, he describes his state during these years, and his deliverance from it, as follows:

"Though I could never fully come into this," (the quietness of mysticism,) "nor contentedly omit what God enjoined, yet, I know not how, I fluctuated between obedience and disobedience. I had no heart, no vigour, no zeal in obeying, continually doubting whether I was right or wrong, and never out of perplexities and entanglements. Nor can I at this hour give a distinct account how I came back a little toward the right way; only

\* "Works," vol. iii. p. 72.

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my present sense is this—all the other enemies of Christianity are triflers; the mystics\* are the most dangerous; they stab it in the vitals, and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them.”†

So Wesley wrote in the beginning of 1738, on his return from America. What has now been shown is the interior view of his character and experience. I shall proceed to give a view of him as seen from the exterior by an intimate and gifted Christian friend.

But I must first recapitulate a few dates and facts, as mementos of an often-told history of which the interesting and instructive details are very fully given by Mr. Tyerman.

During Wesley's absence from college in 1727, while he was serving his father's rec-

\* On November 23, 1736, twelve months after his leaving England, Wesley wrote a letter to his brother Samuel, in which he gives an admirable scheme (in brief) of the mystic doctrines, and asks his brother's "thoughts" upon them. It would appear that, at that time, he had but lately made his escape from these subtleties, which, though Mr. Tyerman speaks of them as "mystified balderdash," have led astray many hearts and minds of the finest quality. "I think," he says, in introducing the subject to his brother, "the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics; under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace." It is evident, also, from the style of his earnest application to his brother, that, even as he wrote them, he felt the power of the mystic spell.—*Tyerman* vol. i. p. 133.

† "Southey's Wesley," vol. i. p. 112.

tory of Wroote, his brother Charles (then at Christ Church) had become serious, and he and a few serious undergraduates began to meet and consort together. This company it was which, in the absence of John, was first nicknamed variously as Sacramentarians, Bible Bigots, Bible Moths, the Holy or the Godly Club, and, finally, Methodists. Returning to Oxford in November, 1729, at the request of the authorities, to become a college tutor, John Wesley was immediately placed at the head of this company, being styled the Father of the Holy Club. Whitefield, Hervey, Robert Kirkham, and poor Morgan, who died so soon, were among the earliest members of this society.\* Mr. Gambold also, afterwards a Moravian bishop, a man both of deep piety and of fine poetic genius, became a member of it. The best picture extant of what Wesley was at this time, the view to which I have referred above, is that delineated by Gambold after Wesley had sailed to Georgia. It was given in a letter addressed to a member of Wesley's family. After stating how he became acquainted with Charles Wesley, how Charles Wesley took him to his brother, the profound deference and unbounded and tender affection

\* For an exhaustive account of all the original Methodists, see Tyerman's "Oxford Methodists."

which Charles ever showed toward John, the part which Mr. Morgan had in suggesting the society out of which Methodism arose, and that the two Wesleys and Morgan were the first members of that society, Gambold further proceeds :—

“ Mr. John Wesley was always the chief manager, for which he was very fit. For he had not only more learning and experience than the rest, but he was blessed with such activity as to be always gaining ground, and such steadiness that he lost none; what proposals he made to any were sure to alarm them, because he was so much in earnest; nor could they afterward slight them, because they saw him always the same. What supported this uniform vigour was the care he took to consider well of every affair before he engaged in it, making all his decisions in the fear of God, without passion, humour, or self-confidence; for though he had naturally a very clear apprehension, yet his exact prudence depended more on honesty and singleness of heart. To this I may add that he had, I think, something of authority in his countenance. Yet he never assumed any to himself above his companions; any of them might speak their mind, and their wishes were as strictly regarded by him as his were by them.

. . . They took great pains with the younger members of the University, to rescue them from bad company, and to encourage them in a sober, studious life. When they had some interest with any such, they would get them to breakfast, and over a dish of tea endeavour to fasten some good hint upon them; they would bring them acquainted with other well-disposed young men; they would help them in those parts of learning which they stuck at; they would close with their best sentiments, drive home their convictions, give them rules of piety when they could receive them, and watch over them with great tenderness.

After describing their works of Christian love and zeal, especially in visiting the prisons and dealing with the prisoners, in instructing poor, ignorant children and relieving the poor, their fasting twice weekly, and their weekly communion, Mr. Gambold proceeds:—

“They seldom took any notice of the accusations brought against them; but if they made any reply, it was commonly such a plain and simple one, as if there was nothing more in the case, but that they had just heard some doctrines of their Saviour, and had believed and done accordingly. . . . He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have often seen him come

out of his closet with a serenity that was next to shining; it discovered where he had been, and gave me double hope of receiving wise direction in the matter about which I came to consult him. . . . He used many arts to be religious, but none to seem so; with a soul always upon the stretch, and a most transparent sincerity, he addicted himself to every good word and work. . . . He is now gone to Georgia as a missionary. . . . A family picture of him his relations may be allowed to keep by them. And this is the idea of Mr. Wesley which I cherish for the service of my own soul, and which I take the liberty likewise to deposit with you.”\*

Such was Wesley, the Oxford Methodist.

\* Part of this letter was quoted in Whitehead's "Life of Wesley." Dr. Hoole had, and allowed me to use, a copy of the original transcribed from the short-hand.

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## CHAPTER V.

### WESLEY IN GEORGIA—HIS RELATIONS WITH MISS HOPKEY.

I MUST bring this part of my study to a close by a brief reference to Wesley's Georgian History of two years and four months from the time of his leaving till the time of his returning to this country, his departure on his voyage being from Gravesend, on October 21, 1735, his return to Deal on February 1, 1738. Of the voyage home and back I shall say nothing at this time; although the outward voyage, in the course of which Wesley was introduced for the first time into Moravian fellowship, produced, as all the world knows, a critical effect in the development of his views and character, and led on to the connection with Böhler, which was the means of working in him so profound and far-reaching a change of spirit and principles. The chief matter of general human interest in Wesley's Georgian history was his disappointment in love with Miss Sophia Hopkey, the niece of Mr. Causton, the magistrate of the colony. Into this, however, I shall not go in detail, because the story is



well known, and Mr. Tyerman has told all about it very plainly, and more fully than it was ever told before. There is one point, however, as to which I must say a few words. Henry Moore, in his "Life of Wesley," has a version of one part of this affair, which he professes to have learned from Wesley himself in full distinctness, and according to which Wesley never actually proposed marriage to Miss Hopkey. Mr. Tyerman most unceremoniously discredits this version as wholly unworthy of reliance, and as "painfully ludicrous." I confess that I cannot accept this "short and easy method" of dealing with Moore's testimony as to Wesley's own account. I think a little considerate attention given to the matter would have prevented Mr. Tyerman from making so unceremonious an attack on the credit of either John Wesley or Henry Moore, and have shown him that there is really no contradiction between the sentences which he quotes from Wesley's private Diary and the statement of Henry Moore. I should weave the two accounts into one consistent statement in some such way as follows:—

The young chaplain and "ordinary" of the province of Georgia—a clergyman and a gentleman, and withal a man of handsome

personal appearance, notwithstanding his smallness of stature—comes to Savannah. Who so likely as he to attract the attention of the magistrate's niece, resident in the magistrate's family? Was he not, next to Governor Oglethorpe, the best gentleman in the colony, and in influence, after the governor, only second to her uncle, the magistrate? From the first, she makes him her mark. He has a long and dangerous illness; she waits upon him continually, night and day. He has special and dainty taste in dress; the Horatian "*simplex munditiis*" expresses his standard of propriety and grace, regarding the matter either as a gentleman or a Christian; simplicity becomes accordingly her law, and she appears in plain, but graceful, white before him continually. He is a devotee, and she becomes devout. She wins the minister's heart by her regular attendance at his early morning service, and by taking to light suppers and early hours at night under his advice. She becomes his penitent, and repairs to him when proposing to take the Communion. *Quid multa?* We know how unsuspecting and how susceptible to feminine attraction and charm Wesley was; here was all that he could desire, the very "hand-maiden of the Lord." Wesley is deeply in

love. Meantime, others have clearer eyes than the fascinated chaplain; something is known of Miss Hopkey's inner woman; she has, in effect, courted the minister, and he is about to fall under the arts of an attractive, but unsuitable, woman. Delamotte, his brother collegian and brother Methodist, his companion and friend, gives a word of warning to Wesley. Delamotte also lays the matter before the Moravian elders, a venerable body in the eyes of the teachable and single-minded chaplain. These express their judgment that his marriage with this lady would be against the will of God. Wesley, overawed, says, "The will of the Lord be done," and goes away convinced, for the time at least, that it would be wrong in him to prosecute this connection any further.

In all this I can see nothing but what is perfectly natural under the circumstances; especially considering how Wesley was accustomed, at that time and for years afterward, to defer to what he regarded as the determinations of Providence, sometimes given in the way of impressions, and sometimes of the lot, and still more to the combined judgment and conclusion of wise and good men. He had been accustomed to act in this spirit at Oxford, and to instruct others to do the like.

I conceive that what followed was probably something like this. Wesley became more constrained in his manner, and intermitted his attentions. Miss Hopkey hears some rumour of consultations with Moravians touching her affair. She discovers, at the same time, that Wesley's ritualistic requirements are somewhat too severe for her taste and powers. Another admirer is in the field, and she at once discards her clerical lover. Wesley, notwithstanding what had occurred, had never lost his own love for the lady, and is grieved accordingly. Nevertheless, he had been thinking that it was his duty to give up the connection, although he had not been able to gather courage to let her understand his feeling; and so the affair ends. All this surely is quite consistent with Henry Moore's statement, that there had never been any definite proposal on Wesley's part. If there had been, it is certain that it would have been made in the first instance to Mr. Causton, the young lady's guardian. Clergymen of Wesley's character and position did not, in those days, slip out proposals of marriage informally and privately to the ward or daughter in the first instance. They addressed themselves, and were bound to address themselves, in the first instance, and

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with all formality, to the parent or guardian. The undoubted fact is, that no proposal of marriage to Miss Hopkey was ever addressed by Wesley to her uncle, and that no charge of dishonourable conduct or of breach of engagement was ever preferred against Wesley either by Mrs. Williamson or by Mr. Causton: these considerations settle the question for us. Mr. Tyerman himself informs us, that before the grand jury Mrs. Williamson (Miss Hopkey) "was called, but acknowledged, in the course of her examination, that she had no objection to Wesley's behaviour previous to her marriage. Mr. and Mrs. Causton were also examined; when the former confessed that, if Mr. Wesley had asked his consent to marry his niece, he would not have refused it."\*

It is plain enough that Wesley's great offence was, that he did *not* propose. His hesitation lost him Miss Hopkey—a loss which, no doubt, was a real gain and blessing. Mr. Moore's account is not "painfully ludicrous," but is well sustained by all the evidence. It is sustained, indeed, by the very passages which Mr. Tyerman quotes from the unpublished Journal. Here is one—

"*February 5th, 1737.*—One of the most remarkable dispensations of Providence to-

\* Tyerman, vol. i. p. 156.

ward me began to show itself this day. For many days after, I could not at all judge which way the scale would turn ; nor was it fully determined till March 4th, on which day God commanded me to pull out my right eye ; and, by His grace, I determined to do so, but, being slack in the execution, on Saturday, March 12th, God being very merciful to me, my friend performed what I could not."

The meaning of this is not hard to decipher. Delamotte had spoken to Wesley, as Moore relates, and Wesley felt bound to take advice. He did take advice with David Nitzchmann, as Moore also relates, and his answer was dubious, suggesting grave caution and deliberation. After a month thus passed in painful irresolution, on the 4th of March, Nitzchmann communicates to Wesley the judgment of his fellow-elders—I have no doubt a most sound judgment—that he ought not to marry. Wesley receives this as from the Lord, and determines to carry it out, but is "slack in the execution." On the 8th, the matter being blown abroad in gossiping Savannah, Miss Hopkey takes her revenge by engaging herself to an altogether unworthy person of the name of Williamson. On the 7th, as we learn from the Diary, Wesley had walked with Causton "to his country lot,"

and had greatly admired the place, but had made no overture of marriage. Wesley's entry in regard to the marriage is as follows :—

“March 8th, Miss Sophy engaged herself to Mr. Williamson, a person not remarkable for handsomeness, neither for greatness, neither for wit, or knowledge, or sense, and least of all for religion ; and on Saturday, March 12th, they were married at Parrys-bury—this being the day which completed the year from my first speaking to her. What Thou doest, O God, I know not now, but I shall know hereafter.”

That he had tenderly loved Miss Hopkey is certain ; equally evident it is that he must have been a somewhat trying, and not easily comprehensible, suitor, especially to a vain young lady ; and the hasty marriage shows how bitterly she resented his indecision, and the slight which she conceived herself to have suffered. Forty-nine years afterwards, as Mr. Tyerman reminds us, he wrote, in reference to this event : “I remember when I read these words in the church at Savannah : ‘Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke,’ I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter a word more. But our comfort is that He that made the heart can heal the heart.”

Such was the unprosperous issue of Wesley's third love affair. He was not, it must be confessed, fortunate in these affairs ; but they illustrate very strongly the real nature of the man. He was susceptible, to weakness, in presence of female attractions, but he was always delicate and honourable in his feelings and conduct. On the whole, we cannot but love our Wesley the better for these revelations. At the same time, it is a matter of regret that Mr. Tyerman has so inadequately rendered them, as he has, in my judgment, inadequately and inapprehensively represented, throughout his volumes, Wesley's relations of affection and confidence with women.

This affair, as many of my readers know, and all may fully know by consulting Mr. Tyerman's interesting pages, was the beginning of troubles to Wesley. The worldly and wicked members of the colony—and, in such a colony as Georgia was, these could not but be the majority—had now the magistrate and his family on their side. A suit at law was brought against him, which, however, completely broke down, and Wesley saw that his only course was to leave the colony—"a sadder and a wiser man" than he entered it.



## CHAPTER VI.

### WESLEY'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS AND CHARACTER IN GEORGIA.

**F**ROM the public indictment against Wesley in the Savannah court, and his own testimony or comments in his Diary, we know what sort of a Churchman he was in Georgia. The resemblance of his practices to those of modern High Anglicans is, in most points, exceedingly striking. He had early, and also forenoon, service every day; he divided the morning service, taking the Litany as a separate service; he inculcated fasting, (real, hard fasting, his was,) and confession, and weekly communion; he refused the Lord's Supper to all who had not been episcopally baptized; he insisted on baptism by immersion; he re-baptized the children of Dissenters; and he refused to bury all who had not received Episcopalian baptism. One only thing was wanting to make the parallel with our moderns complete: there is no evidence that he believed in the conversion of the elements by consecration, or in their doctrine of the "real presence."\*

\* It is well known that Wesley refused the Lord's Supper to

But, at the same time that he was in some respects an intolerant High-Church ritualist, he was inwardly melting, and the light of spiritual liberty was dawning into his soul. He attended the Presbyterian service at Darien, heard Mr. M'Leod, the minister, to his great astonishment, offer an extemporary prayer and preach a written sermon, on which fact he fails not to remark in his Diary, and was much struck by the Christian devoutness and the exemplary Christian behaviour of the people of his charge; he was continually learning from the Moravians, with all meekness; he gathered a meeting of the clergy of the province, at which, he says in his Diary, "there was such a conversation, for several hours, on 'Christ our Righteousness and Example,' with such seriousness and closeness as I never heard in England in all the visitations I have been present at;"

one of the most exemplary Christians in the colony, Belzius, the pastor of the Salzburghers, because he had not been, as he insisted, canonically baptized. His entry in his Journal in reference to this matter, written many years later, will not be forgotten, which ends with the words, "Can High-Church bigotry go further than this? And how well have I since been beaten with mine own staff!" In regard to this matter there is the following entry in Wesley's unpublished Journal, under date Sunday, July 17, 1737: "I had occasion to make a very unusual trial of the temper of Mr. Belzius, pastor of the Salzburghers, in which he behaved with such lowliness and meekness as became a disciple of Jesus Christ."

and he thus expresses to a friend his views respecting the innermost nature of religion:—

“I entirely agree with you that religion is love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; that, as it is the happiest, so it is the cheerfulest thing in the world; that it is utterly inconsistent with moroseness, sourness, severity, and indeed with whatever is not according to the softness, sweetness, and gentleness of Christ Jesus. I believe it is equally contrary to all preciseness, stiffness, affectation, and unnecessary singularity. I allow, too, that prudence, as well as zeal, is of the utmost importance in the Christian life. But I do not yet see any possible case wherein trifling conversation can be an instance of it. In the following Scriptures I take all such to be flatly forbidden; Matt. xii. 36; Eph. v. 4, and iv. 29; Col. iv. 6.

“That I shall be laughed at for this I know; so was my Master. I am not for a stern, austere manner of conversing—no: let all the cheerfulness of faith be there, all the joyfulness of hope, all the amiable sweetness, the winning easiness of love. If we must have art, “*Hæc mihi erunt artes.*””\*

So far distant from real Christianity does

\* Tyerman, vol. i. p. 138.

Wesley, the Georgian Missionary, appear to have been, if we look only at his bigotry, his ritualism, his wearisome and punctilious externalism ; so near, notwithstanding, does he come in his inner desires and in his views respecting the nature of religious experience. A similar combination, we cannot doubt, exists to-day in the case of not a few who seem not untruly to be infatuated sticklers for a servile and benighted High-Anglicanism.

I have thus endeavoured, beating ground seldom trodden, and known hitherto to very few, to exhibit the living and visible humanity of Wesley, the Collegian and the Oxford Anglican, before he entered into the liberty of the children of God. In the Third part of this study I shall endeavour to illustrate the stages and the true character of his evangelical conversion, and his matured character after his conversion, especially on the side of his intellect, so sceptical, and yet seemingly so credulous ; his wonderful power as a preacher ; and his temper and principles as a living companion, and as an administrator. Wesley's intellect, and his character as a preacher, appear to me, as yet, to have been little understood.

## PART III.

### *JOHN WESLEY AFTER HIS CONVERSION AND IN THE MATURITY OF HIS POWERS.*



## CHAPTER I.

### WESLEY'S RITUALISM AND MYSTICISM BEFORE HIS EVANGELICAL CONVERSION.

IT will be necessary, in opening what I desire now to say respecting Wesley in his mature and in his later life, that I should recapitulate some of the information contained in the former part of this volume. We left Wesley still in Georgia, but on the point of returning to England. The date was 1737-8.

Wesley had gone to Oxford in 1720, being seventeen years of age. He took his bachelor's degree in 1724. He was ordained deacon in 1725, and elected Fellow of Lincoln College six months later, in March, 1726. He had always been a moral youth, with religious habits and predilections; but in 1725 he was deeply awakened to a sense of his want of real holiness, and began thence-

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forth to seek after absolute consecration to God, as the great aim of his life. The main outline of his characteristic teaching in future life as to Christian perfection may be traced in the views which he at this time embraced, and which he seems to have learned chiefly from Thomas à Kempis and Jeremy Taylor. In the same year, also, he settled his views in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination. About the same time, revolting at this point from Jeremy Taylor, he concluded that it must be the privilege and blessing of a Christian to know his acceptance with God.

In 1727, during Wesley's absence from Oxford at Wroote, where he was serving his father's rectory, his brother Charles became serious, and the original company of "Methodists," so designated in mockery or in pleasantry, was formed; Charles and a few like-minded friends being the members of the company. In 1730, shortly after his return to residence at Oxford, John Wesley was placed at the head of this company, being styled the Father of the Holy Club.

Wesley, as I have just stated, left Oxford in 1727, and went for a time to reside in Lincolnshire. Not long before his leaving he had visited the family of the Kirkhams, at

Stanton, in Gloucestershire; and there appears, as we have seen, to have been at that time a mutual attachment between himself and Miss Betty Kirkham. Of this, however, we lose the traces for several years afterward. During those years, it is to be observed, Wesley was very far away from Gloucestershire; they were the years during which he had exchanged his university life for parochial residence and service in Lincolnshire. Possibly there may have been some reason connected with Stanton which helped in part to keep him so long away from Oxford, though the reason was certainly not that he had become indifferent to the merits of his friend Kirkham's sister. However, to Oxford he returned, as we have noted, at the end of 1729, and became the chief of the Methodist band. In the summer of that same year he renewed his personal intercourse with the daughter of the Stanton parsonage, although without any hope of marriage being possible; indeed, it seems not unlikely that about this time she married and became Mrs. Wilson. Through his connection with her family he was about the same time introduced to Mrs. Pendarves, afterward Mrs. Delany, with whom, during several years following, he kept up the remarkable correspondence from

which I have given some extracts. His last and parting letter to her was dated 1734. By that time he had learned that his way and hers through life must be separate and divergent. Three years before he was deeply engaged to her in admiration and affection, and would most gladly have married her if he had been able. At that time she would have been a compensation to him for even the loss of his former hopes as to Miss Kirkham.

It was precisely during the interval which covers the correspondence with Mrs. Pendarves that Wesley's High-Church asceticism developed itself at Oxford. He set himself conscientiously to be an Anglican Churchman, according to the prescriptions of the Rubric; and to be a devout and holy Christian, according to early ecclesiastical examples and traditions. He became, accordingly, an ascetic ritualist of the strictest and most advanced class. At this time, to use his own words of himself, he "made antiquity a co-ordinate rule with Scripture." \*

In 1735 he went to Georgia, and there, while inwardly the need and the attainability

\* Mr. Tyerman, in his "Oxford Methodists," has shown that it was in 1733 that Wesley, partly through the influence of his friend and fellow-Methodist, Clayton, left the guidance of the Bible to follow that of tradition, or such pretended tradition as the Apostolical Constitutions.



of a real consciousness and power of Divine love and holiness, as contradistinguished from any external services or observances, became with him a matter of deepening and almost passionate conviction, outwardly his rule of life and service seemed to become more and more forbidding and unevangelical in its legal servility, its rubrical punctiliousness, and its ascetic severity. He was all that a High Anglo-Catholic of the present day is understood to be, except that he seems not to have believed in the "conversion of the elements" in the eucharist.

Nevertheless, with all his punctilious ritualism, there was curiously intermixed, during nearly the whole of these seven years, (1730—1737-8,) a strong tincture of mystical tendency and influence. This element represented the reaction, in such a true and earnest soul as Wesley's, of the inward against the merely outward. Through all his life, indeed, Wesley was resolute to maintain the union of outward godliness and religious observance with inward and spiritual contemplation and affection. But during the period of which we are now speaking he had not found, in the "righteousness of faith," the true *nexus* and harmony between these antithetic necessities. Hence, at this period,

the intermixture of ritualism and mysticism, the oscillations from one to the other, of which we have had a view in the Second Part of this life-study. Never ceasing to be outwardly the strict and ascetic High-Churchman, Wesley, in his inward sympathies and longings, found himself strongly attracted by the union of contemplation and passion in the writings of the best class of devotional Mystics, and was himself often a mystic at heart. Indeed, although servile ritualism and mysticism are antagonistic to each other, there is a deep congeniality, as all religious history has shown, between asceticism and mysticism, and, accordingly, on his ascetic side, Wesley found himself verging naturally toward the school from which, as a punctilious legalist, he was repelled. Besides which Wesley could not, even for a time, find *rest* in legalism: earnest and sincere spirits never can. Whereas mysticism was a doctrine of rest; made fair offers to him of "quietness and assurance for ever."

It was about 1728 or 1729 that Wesley was deeply impressed by reading Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call." The fruit of these powerful books was seen in his deepened earnestness and "Methodist" singularity of religious strictness and devotion

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on his return to Oxford; that is, from the beginning of the year 1730. In 1732 he paid a personal visit to Law, at Putney; and from that period seems to have begun to read the Mystics, chiefly, it would appear, at first, the Germans who preceded and in part prepared the way for the Reformation, such as Tauler, and the author of the "*Theologia Germanica*;" but afterward, also, such French writers as Madame de Bourignon. Just as he was leaving England for Georgia, Law was going astray, wide and deep, by plunging into the unfathomable confusions of Behmenism. Into these Wesley never followed him; but, as I have already shown, appears to have distinctly and intelligently extricated himself from the meshes of mysticism toward the end of the year 1736, during his sojourn in Georgia. His criticism on the principles of mysticism, given in a letter to his brother Samuel, from Georgia, under date November 23, 1736, and already referred to in a note, is worth quoting here, both for its own intrinsic value and as a specimen of his philosophical and critical capacity at this period of his life.

"I think," he says, "the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the Mystics; under which

term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace. I have drawn up a short scheme of their doctrines, and beg your thoughts upon it as soon as you can conveniently. Give me them as particularly, fully, and strongly, as your time will permit. They may be of consequence, not only to all this province, but to nations of Christians yet unborn.

“ ‘All means are not necessary for all men ; therefore each person must use such means, and such only, as he finds necessary for him. When the end is attained, the means cease.’

“ ‘Men utterly divested of free-will, of self-love, and of self-activity, are entered into the passive state, and enjoy such a contemplation as is not only above faith but above sight—such as is entirely free from images, thoughts, and discourse, and never interrupted by sins of infirmity or voluntary distractions.’ They have absolutely renounced their reason and understanding ; else they could not be guided by a Divine light. They seek no clear or particular knowledge of any thing ; but only an obscure, general knowledge, which is far better.’

“ ‘Having thus attained the end, the means must cease. Hope is swallowed up in love ; sight, or something more than sight, takes

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the place of faith. All particular virtues they possess in the essence, and, therefore, need not the distinct exercise of them. They work, likewise, all good works essentially, not accidentally ; and use all outward means only as they are moved thereto.'

" ' Public prayer, or any forms, they need not, for they pray without ceasing. Sensible devotion in any prayer they despise, it being a great hinderance to perfection. The Scripture they need not read, for it is only His letter, with whom they converse face to face.' " \*

The one really plausible position of all that are here laid down is that set forth in the first paragraph of the summary. How much of truth there is in it it is not my business to inquire at this moment. But I may observe that Wesley's special weakness at this time as a ritualist was in precise antithesis to this position. He taught the pernicious error which is in the opposite extreme to the no less pernicious mystical half-truth. His one prescription for the attainment of holiness and happiness was the use of "the means of grace"—of the "instituted" means. He taught that the more means are made use of, the more grace must needs come to the sincere user of

\* "Tyerman's Wesley," vol. i. pp. 133, 134.

them. His doctrine was a servile legalism, a plodding ritualism, less absurd, perhaps, and less open to mischievous abuse, than the extremer developments of the mysticism summarized in the passage I have quoted, but not less opposed to Christian truth, and in special contradiction to the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free. One secret of the strength and attraction of the mystical doctrines for him—that which drew him to them, even while he revolted against them—consisted, doubtless, in the fact that the element of truth which lay at the bottom of all their Antinomian paradoxes and inexplicable subtleties, was, if it could only have been disinvolved from the fallacies in which it was embedded, precisely the principle that was needed to correct his own servile doctrine of “means”—his ritualistic legalism. To this must be added, that the mystical doctrines, under the hands of some of their teachers, become a very cunning web of verbal deductions; a fabric of fallacies very deftly put together, and exceedingly likely to impose upon a verbal logician. Now, Wesley was a most dexterous master of the logical art and method. But if his mastery of the logician’s craft often stood him in good stead when conducting an argument, it also was

at times a snare to him. If he often easily and happily disentangled verbal subtleties, he was sometimes entangled in them. The school in which he was trained was a school of verbal dialectics and of scholastic distinctions. Hence, though he was furnished with the skill and possessed the power finally to penetrate and refute the fallacies of the Mystics, he was for a time bewildered in their plausible mazes.

The passage I have quoted shows, at any rate, that Wesley had, from the beginning, the taste and tendencies of the philosophic theologian; and, moreover, that he had a fine philosophic capacity. The philosophic tincture and bias of thought remained with Wesley through life, and was shown in many of his sermons, not only in such of his most finished discourses, published in his ripe maturity of thought, as that on "The Original of the Law," but in many of those which, in the later years of his long life, he wrote for the "Arminian Magazine." His original tendency, in fact, was to be a philosophical rather than an evangelical, or even a biblical, theologian. His Moravian guides, especially Böhler, drove him to the New Testament. Böhler had strong reason when he said to him, "*Mi frater, mi frater, ista philosophia tua*

*excoquenda est.*" It has often been said that Wesley was not a metaphysician; and there is truth in the saying, although it is by no means so absolutely true as it is commonly assumed to be. But then there can hardly be said to have been any metaphysical science in his earlier days, least of all at Oxford. It might not be untruly said that even Cudworth was no metaphysician. But if Wesley was not a metaphysician, he was a philosophical student in the whole bias of his intellect, addicted, no doubt, like all the students of his age, and in the spirit of all scholastic traditions, to synthesis and deduction rather than to analysis and induction; but nevertheless open to correction as respects this tendency. The characteristic parts of Wesley's theology were based on experience and consciousness. His Arminianism was founded on the moral intuitions of humanity, in opposition to the mere deductive logic of Calvinism. His doctrines of assurance and of Christian perfection, although moulded into a system by the help of his logical faculties—occasionally employed, as I venture to think, with more of verbal truth-seeming than of truth-reaching insight—yet reposed in their broad power and merits on the basis of living consciousness and experience. Whether as a logical expositor,



however, or as a witness, and the mouth-piece of other witnesses, Wesley was never a dry, or a merely scholastic and systematic, theologian; there was always in his teaching as a theologian a living freshness of thought and a philosophic basis and mould of exposition. Even as a boy, he was singularly remarkable for reflectiveness; and his Oxford discipline in early life—the influence, also, of Plato and Aristotle, of Taylor, and Beveridge, and Law—had contributed their full share to the permanent colour and quality of his intellectual character.

Through all the preparatory stages of his life, Wesley was emphatically a learner. All through life, indeed, he was a man of a peculiarly open and teachable mind; as much so in his ninth as in his third decade. But during the first five-and-thirty years of his life he was not only a learner, he was a learner in quest of a teacher; he was looking out for a school in which to study and graduate; he was unsettled in his principles. He went to school to the Rubric, and being a loyal son of the Church of England, he worked long and assiduously in that school; but this, after all, was only grinding at the elements—"beggarly elements" he found them to be in after days; he went to school to Law, and

for some years Law was his oracle, until he found that he durst not any longer follow the hazardous excursions of his teacher; he sat as a scholar at the feet of the Moravians during his voyage to Georgia, and also in the colony, although he could not accept all their teachings; he wrote from Georgia to his brother Samuel, entreating him for correction and instruction; in the colony he learned from Lutheran Salzburghers and from Scottish Presbyterians, not indeed, as yet, lessons of true ecclesiastical liberality and catholicity, but much which sunk deep into his open and thoughtful mind. All through he felt that his system of theological and ecclesiastical principles remained yet to be formed; he had not found his centre or his basis; he was far from being at rest. Nevertheless, it is notable that, with all this, he felt that he was a teacher likewise, and he acted as such. If he was ever listening that he might learn, he was also ever speaking to instruct. His personal influence was always very great; there was authority in his presence and his words. Especially we must note that he was under the continual conviction that he was destined to be a chief teacher—the teacher not only of a company in his generation, but of multitudes in many

generations. This conviction is expressed with startling distinctness in the letter to his elder brother which has been quoted. Begging his brother to give him his thoughts respecting the principles of the Mystics, as summarised in the letter, he says, with singular emphasis, "Give me them as particularly, fully, and strongly, as your time will permit. They may be of consequence, not only to all this province, but to nations of Christians yet unborn." So much did he think might depend on the settlement of his own views respecting Christian doctrine. The same sense of a most important destiny for himself as a teacher of men was expressed a year or two earlier, in his well-known reason for remaining at Oxford rather than succeed his father in the Epworth rectorate. "The schools of the prophets," he said, "were at Oxford; and was it not a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain than to purify a particular stream?"\*

\* It is not necessary to the scope of the discussion in the text to consider how far Wesley was justified in the view which he took of his duty respecting the matter referred to above. Not a few have thought that he ought to have yielded to the urgency of what were pleaded as the claims of family affection and duty, and have left Oxford for Epworth. Southey appears to have been of this mind. Mr. Tyerman, who gives a clear and full account of the whole question, evidently feels that Wesley ought to have yielded to his father's and his family's

He seems to have had a settled and governing conviction that there was a great work to be done for the Church and the

appeals. He speaks of this part of Wesley's history as "somewhat painfully mysterious;" and he thinks that he, in fact, clears it up by producing a letter to show that Wesley did, in the end, consent to seek, through his friend Broughton, at the hands of Mr. St. John, then in high office, a presentation to the crown living of Epworth. Miss Wedgwood, on the contrary, holds that Wesley "fully justifies" his insuperable reluctance to leave Oxford; and the Rev. J. Gordon, in his able and well-informed papers on Wesley in the "Theologian," (April and July, 1871) holds, in like manner, that Wesley was perfectly right in his feelings upon the matter. I think that, on such a point, Wesley alone could be the judge in his own case. It was a question of personal conscience and conviction. "He felt that he had a vocation to teach thinkers and teachers, to teach in the schools of the prophets;" that to him was duty. He knew what a country parish and parish duty were; he had served more than two years at Wroote; and he felt that a country cure was *not* his vocation. It seems probable, from the evidence which Mr. Tyerman has produced, that, at the last, Wesley did, against his own proper judgment and will, allow an application to be made on his behalf for presentation to Epworth in succession to his father. Miss Wedgwood, also, has, from other data, arrived at the same conclusion. "It appears, however," she says, "from an obscure sentence in a letter of Charles Wesley's, that John did at last make an unsuccessful and reluctant application for the living." I do not know to what letter she refers, and Mr. Tyerman, who knows almost everything about the Wesleys, makes no reference to any such sentence in any letter of Charles; but the coincidence between Mr. Tyerman's and Miss Wedgwood's conclusion is striking. Still this fact, if it be a fact, does not at all change the general aspect of the affair, and it remains true, notwithstanding, that Wesley, to use his own words, "continued in his purpose to live and die at Oxford, till Dr. Burton pressed him to go Georgia." I may fairly assume that he neither expected nor desired the application, to which he reluctantly consented, to be successful.

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world, for the present and yet more for the future ; a work which God had called him to do. He saw around him the need of such a work—a hollow and heartless world, full of corruption, vanity and unrest, and a supine, undisciplined, insensible Church ; and he felt stirring strongly within him the power and the call to awaken and organize the Church, and to impress and convert the world.

Such was John Wesley, the Oxford Methodist and the Georgian Missionary. Such, on the whole, he appears to have remained up to the time of his quitting Georgia. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the intolerant High-Church ritualist was all the time, and especially toward the end of his stay in Georgia, inwardly beginning to melt ; the light of spiritual liberty, even before he quitted Georgia, was beginning to break through the darkness which had so long wrapped him round, and to dawn into his soul ; and during the spiritual solitude of his voyage home he must have learned much, and learned quickly. When he landed at Deal he was a very different man from what he had been two years and a half before, when he sailed for Georgia. This is shown by the reflections which at that time he wrote

in his Journal. It is evident that his intercourse in the colony with Moravians, Salzburghers, and Presbyterians, in connection with his experience of his own errors and failures, and with the diligent and prayerful study of the Scriptures, had profited him more, upon recollection and reconsideration, during the voyage, than during the time he was in the colony, and was actively enforcing his own strongly-held views, and occupied in the routine of Church service and rubrical ceremonial.

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## CHAPTER II.

### WESLEY'S EVANGELICAL CONVERSION.

THE following are the reflections to which I have referred, as written down by Wesley immediately after his return to England. They are so important that, notwithstanding their length, I must give them entire, with the notes which Wesley appended to them in the later editions of his Journal:—

“It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity : but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I least of all suspected) that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.\* ‘I am not mad,’ though I thus speak ; but ‘I speak the words of truth and soberness ;’ if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see that as I am so are they.

“Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of

\* “I am not sure of this.”

divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country; I have put my life in my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God should please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me in His sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace? (which, nevertheless, is meet, right, and our bounden duty.) Or that I know nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward moral righteousness, blameless? Or, to come closer yet, the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, divine character of a Christian? By no means. If the oracles of God are true, if we are still to abide by 'the law and the



testimony;’ all these things, though, when ennobled by faith in Christ,\* they are holy, and just, and good, yet without it are ‘dung and dross,’ meet only to be purged away by ‘the fire that never shall be quenched.’

“This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth, that I ‘am fallen short of the glory of God;’ that my whole heart is, ‘altogether corrupt and abominable;’ and, consequently, my whole life; seeing it cannot be that an ‘evil tree’ should ‘bring forth good fruit:’ that ‘alienated’ as I am from the life of God, I am ‘a child of wrath,’† an heir of hell; that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God—so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, which ‘are more in number than the hairs of my head’—that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide His righteous judgment: that, ‘having the sentence of death’ in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being ‘justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus;’ I have no hope, but that if I seek I

\* “I believe not.”

† “I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son.” •

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shall find Christ, and 'be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Phil. iii. 9.

"If it be said that I have faith, (for many such things have I heard from many miserable comforters,) I answer, So have the devils—a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the apostles had even at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus first 'manifested forth His glory; even then they, in a sort, 'believed on Him;' but they had not then 'the faith that overcometh the world.' The faith I want is,\* 'A sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God.' I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans: that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, 'I live not; but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it, (though many imagine they have it who have it not,) for whosoever hath it is 'freed

\* "The faith of a son."

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from sin,' the whole 'body of sin is destroyed' in him : he is 'freed from fear,' 'having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' And he is freed from doubt, 'having the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him;' which 'Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.'"

Here was evidently a spirit prepared of the Lord to receive the glad tidings of "salvation by faith," in the simplest and most evangelical form. Wesley was already on the very verge of the truth in its freedom and fulness. He was "convinced of sin;" was truly awakened and penitent, and was feeling after, was yearning for, the true "righteousness of Christ." It was natural that his humbled and chastened spirit, in the depth of its penitential awakening, should "write bitter things" against itself. In after years, writing in the fulness of his wide and mature Christian experience, Wesley revised the language which he had written in his sore trouble of spirit. To the passage which declares that he had never been "converted to God," he appended as a note the words, "I am not sure of this." Evidently the question here is as to the meaning of the word

"converted." In one sense Wesley was truly and deeply "converted;" in another sense he was not yet "converted," not having as yet been made a partaker of the "righteousness of faith," in its full and true evangelical sense. He also, in his later revisions, corrected the record in his Journal at some other points, by stating that "he had even then the faith of a servant, though not of a son," and that he was *not* at that time "a child of wrath," although he had not attained to that "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," which implies filial confidence, and cannot but bring with it filial love, the witness of the Spirit, and all the fruits which belong to the new birth. A controversy has been raised upon this question, into which I do not feel it needful to go. Mr. Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament," especially if the notes are taken in connection with those sermons of his later life in which he discriminates between the faith and experience of a "servant" of God and of a "son," are fully sufficient to explain in what sense Mr. Wesley may be truly said to have been, and in what sense not to have been, "converted" at the time of his return from Georgia in the first months of 1738. One thing all must be agreed upon, that Wesley was a man of very

different spirit and experience in February, 1738, from what he had been four years before. He was then sincere and in earnest, but oscillating between an unevangelical mysticism and an equally unevangelical ritualistic legalism; he was "beating the air," and "going about to establish his own righteousness." Of the true doctrine of grace he seems to have had little perception or feeling, any more than of the true doctrine of faith—the one, indeed, must ever imply the other—for salvation is "of grace, through faith;" nor does he appear to have been the subject of a true "evangelical repentance." Now, on the contrary, Wesley was evidently a true and lowly penitent, whom the Spirit of God had emptied of his own self-righteousness, that he might be prepared for the reception of Christ's righteousness—"the righteousness which is of God through faith."

In one thing, however, Wesley was not changed on his return. He still believed as firmly as ever in his "vocation." He landed at Deal at half-past four in the morning. That same morning, at a very early hour, before starting for Faversham on his way to London, he read and expounded at the inn, and he did the like after arriving at Faversham in the evening. His humbling experience in

Georgia had not in the least disheartened him, or abated his courage in this respect. Since he left England he had seemed to fail in everything; his influence as a clergyman had declined almost to nothing in Georgia; he had become embroiled in law, partly, at least, through his own unwisdom, if partly through his fidelity; his reputation as a man of counsel and of action could not but have suffered; many slanders respecting him were afloat; his heart, for which it seemed as if no haven of conjugal affection was to be found, had been cruelly wounded. Such was the issue of a voyage and mission which he had undertaken in the fond hope that in a new world he might, in God's hands, be and do something better and something more in his own time and for generations to come, than he had ever been, had ever done, or could have hoped to be or do, even in Oxford, where were "the schools of the prophets," if he had spent his best days there.

It could not but frequently recur to Wesley, in his meditations on the history of the two hapless-seeming years he had spent in America, that there must somewhere be a vital, a fatal, flaw either in his character, or in his doctrine, or in his methods. His

enterprise as a missionary pioneer had broken down in a most humiliating way.

It is true, indeed, as Mr. Tyerman happily quotes Whitefield's "Journal," written but a few months later, to show—that, after all, Wesley had left not a little good behind him in Georgia; that among the best people of the colony "his name" was "very precious," and that he had laid a valuable foundation for Whitefield to build upon. But to Wesley's mind on his voyage home his failures would be present, while the measure of his success would be as yet unknown. Nor, after all, was that measure of success, which we cannot but place in contrast with the results accomplished in Georgia by Whitefield's own ministry, sufficient to do more than qualify, to a limited extent, the picture of failure, on the whole, which has passed under our view.

His Journal reveals to us, in part, the working of his mind during the voyage. He exerted himself to the utmost for the good of the seamen; but this could only yield him partial and temporary relief. During the former part of the voyage he was "continually weighed down with fearfulness and heaviness." He writes, in the fulness of his heart, among many other words of lamentation, that he had thus far "evidently

built without a foundation." During the last fortnight he had some comfort; but yet he writes, five days before the voyage came to an end, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me? Who, what, is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, "To die is gain!"

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!"

Such was the working of Wesley's mind during his voyage home from Georgia—a period which we may look upon as for him a critical season of searching, gracious, humbling experience; a seed-time overcast with heavy clouds, but rich in promise; a seed-time of weeping, which was to be followed by a life-long harvest of spiritual fruitfulness.

Wesley, during the voyage, deliberately reviewed his whole experience, and the phases of thought and feeling through which he had been passing during the twelve years preceding. Of this review I have already availed myself, especially in the former Part, in delineating the formation of his opinions and the growth of his character. We have



seen how near, before he landed at Deal, Wesley had come to the simplicity and truth of Gospel teaching. This "scribe" certainly was "not far from the kingdom of God." The Providence which had brought him thus far on his way—which had brought "the blind by a way that he knew not, even by paths which he had not known"—had in readiness for him at this very point the human guide who was to lead him into the fulness of evangelical faith and experience. "Darkness" was now to be made "light before him," and "crooked things straight." What Philip was to the Ethiopian eunuch, what Peter was to Cornelius, Böhler was to become to Wesley.

At the very moment when Wesley landed at Deal his teacher was on his way to England from Germany. He was a Moravian minister; and he came to England that he might go forward to the very colonies which Wesley had just left. Within a week after Wesley's landing at Deal, he and Böhler met in London. Böhler, in a letter to Zinzendorf, gives a description of Wesley as he found him. He describes him as "a good-natured man,"\*

\* The English translation here is, no doubt, inadequate. The meaning probably is—a man of excellent disposition and principles.

who "knew he did not properly believe on the Saviour, and was willing to be taught." He adds: "Our mode of believing in the Saviour is so easy to Englishmen, that they cannot reconcile themselves to it; if it were a little more artful, [artificial?] they would much sooner find their way into it. They justify themselves; and therefore they always take it for granted that they believe already, and try to prove their faith by their works, and thus so plague and torment themselves that they are at heart very miserable." \*

Wesley always regarded his intercourse with Böhler as the cardinal point in his spiritual history. Having landed at Deal on February 1st, he fell in, six days later (February 7th), with Böhler, just landed from Germany, and procured him lodgings. He sets a special note against this day in his Journal, as "a day much to be remembered;" and he mentions that, from this time, he did not willingly lose any opportunity, during his stay in London, of conversing with Böhler and his companions. He accompanied his Moravian teacher to Oxford on the 17th, and took him with him to visit Mr. Gambold (who had been led astray by "mystic delusion"), at Stanton-Harcourt, on the 18th. It was

\* Tyerman's "Wesley," i. 181, 182.

during this visit to Oxford that Böhler insisted so solemnly to Wesley that "his philosophy" needed to "be purged away." On the 4th of March, returning to Oxford to visit his brother Charles, who had been ill of pleurisy there, he found Böhler with his brother, and writes that by him on the next day (Sunday) he was "clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."\* Meantime Böhler exhorted him to preach the true faith and way of faith, though he might not himself as yet have attained thereto. His intercourse with his Moravian guide at Oxford lasted till the 10th, when Böhler returned to London. On the 23rd, being in Oxford, he met Böhler there again. I give the whole of the entry in his Journal under this date. "I met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith—the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by 'the law and the testimony,' and being confident that God would hereby show me whether this doctrine was of God."

\* "With the full Christian salvation," is Wesley's note at this place in the revised edition of his early Journals.

Already the "new wine" of the kingdom was working mightily within his breast. He had been the slave of forms; he had been greatly surprised, if not shocked, when he heard the Presbyterian minister in the American colony offer an extemporary prayer. But now we find him writing, under date of April 1st, "Being at Mr. Fox's society, my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer which we were accustomed to use there. Neither do I purpose to be confined to them any more, but to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as I may find suitable to particular occasions." The new wine was threatening to burst the "old bottles;" presently "new bottles" were to be provided, so that the wine should not be lost. Meantime, in the record last quoted, we recognize the main principle of Wesley's ecclesiastical course. His singularity, and independence of decision and action, had nothing factious about them; they resulted from the simple, disinterested, paramount principle of using whatever means or methods of action clearly promised to do the most good. He enters into no abstract controversy as to praying with or without forms; probably his experiences among the Moravians, yet more than his intercourse with the Presbyterian minister and congregation,

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had served to emancipate him from the bondage of custom and servile ecclesiasticism as to this particular, while an acute Oxford Churchman like him was not likely to adopt a sweeping condemnation of forms of prayer, which would not only have prohibited the use of the Liturgy of his own Church, ever by him so deeply loved, but even of the Lord's prayer. But he finds free prayer, under certain conditions of feeling, to be more congenial, more adequate, and more affecting, than any form could be ; therefore he determines henceforth to hold himself at liberty, according to the occasion, to pray with or without forms. As to any reproach of singularity or enthusiasm, while he by no means courted such reproach, the time had long gone by when it could have any terror for him. Here, then, we have a typical instance, thus early in his course, of the spirit and principles which governed Wesley's proceedings through life. The ritualist was already greatly changed ; a new inspiration was welling up within him. His bonds had been for some time melting away ; there was soon to be an end of them. Already the manacles had dissolved from the hands of devotion ; soon the fetters would be broken which had bound his feet from running in the evangelical way. Already he

had been impelled to use the blessed privilege of free utterance in prayer, and to avail himself of the large liberty to pray with "all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" the day was very near when, by his preaching also, the Word of the Lord was to "have free course and be glorified."

On the 22nd of April, Wesley met Böhler again in London. As to the nature of faith the Moravian had prevailed, and also as to the fruits of faith; but Wesley still doubted whether there was scriptural authority for the penitent, prayerful, waiting soul, to expect to receive the power and gift of faith immediately through the operation of the Holy Ghost; whether it could really be imparted in a moment. Here, again, he records in his Journal that he was silenced by an appeal to the Scripture, where, to his "utter astonishment," he "found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions, scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth." Wesley, however, was not by any means easily beaten out of his English and Church-of-England\* habits of thought in respect to the faith of a Christian. He urged that, whatever

\* Church-of-England, as that Church actually was and had long been, but not as the Homilies teach.

might have been the case in apostolic times, there was no proof that God worked in the same manner now. From this last hold of doubt and incredulity he was dislodged the next day (Sunday, the 23rd) by the evidence of "several living witnesses." "Here," he says, "ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help Thou mine unbelief.'"

It is evident that up to this time, far as he had been brought on his way toward the great Gospel truth, Wesley had yet never been able to free himself from the feeling that Christian faith was largely an intellectual exercise; and that, where it ceased to be intellectual, it became a humanly moral act; that it was "of the operation," not "of the Holy Ghost," but of a man's own understanding and responsible moral inclination or will. The great truth that the power descends from God—that it must be waited and looked for in the way of prayer and penitent seeking and service—that it is a spiritual, supernatural act and habit of soul, at once the fruit and seed of a Divine life-stirring, uniting in itself the characters of penitent humility, of self-renunciation, of simple trust, of absolute obedience, both of understanding and will, indissolubly joined with loving rapture and

self-consecration—that it is, to use Wesley's own words, “the loving, obedient sight of a present and reconciled God”—this was a truth which Wesley had not conceived of, and found it very hard to accept. So true is it, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Wesley, indeed, was not, at the time when he first met Böhler, a merely “natural man,” any more than the disciples were before our Lord's resurrection. But he was not yet, in the full and proper sense, “a spiritual man.” He was a servant of God; perhaps, in a certain sense, he might be regarded as virtually a child of God; but still he was “carnal.” He was not yet fully born into the kingdom of heaven, with its spiritual light and blessedness, although he was “brought to the birth,” and was very near the hour of his enlargement into the “glorious liberty of the children of God.”

Wesley, in his own epitome of what passed between Böhler and himself, thus sums up the final result, so far as it respected the change which had been wrought in his doctrinal views: “I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek



it (that is, faith) unto the end: 1. By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works or righteousness, *on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up.* 2. By adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing—justifying, saving faith; a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.”\*

Wesley continued to consort with Böhler. It was on the 23rd of April (Sunday) that he was finally convinced. He was in continual intercourse with his teacher for several days following, until the 26th, when Böhler accompanied him some miles on his way out of town. His brother's illness brought him back to London on the 1st of May, where he found his friend and guide again. On the 4th Böhler left London to sail to Carolina. Wesley's note in his Journal on Böhler's departure corresponds with the emphatic “Memorandum” inscribed over the date of their first meeting, and reveals also how deep and strong in Wesley's soul was that conviction of his own momentous work and vocation

\* “Works,” vol. iii. p. 73.

to which we have referred : " O what a work hath God begun since his coming into England ! such a one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth shall pass away ! "

Meantime, Wesley had not yet obtained the treasure he had sought for so long and so diligently, though for a long time in wrong directions. He had not himself, as yet, been able to " believe unto salvation. " His brother Charles had not yielded to Böhler's arguments until a fortnight after himself, and, indeed had for a short time angrily opposed John on this point ; nevertheless, partly, as it would seem, through the ministry of sickness, he was made a partaker of " joy and peace through believing " earlier than John. While John was entering this Bethesda, Charles stepped in before him. This was on Sunday, the 21st of May. It was not until Wednesday, the 24th, that John Wesley, according to the beautiful and familiar account which we have in his own words, " felt his heart strangely warmed, felt that he did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, " and had " an assurance given him that Christ had taken away his sin, and saved him from the law of sin and death. " This day, May the 24th, 1738, is a great landmark in the history of the Wesleyan movement.

Until Wesley learned the doctrine of "salvation by grace, through faith, not of ourselves," but as the "gift of God," he had been a ritualist; and it had been his doctrine that salvation was secured by moral and ritual conformity to what the Church requires. From this time forth he taught that salvation was not by works or rites, but by that faith of the new creation, that faith in "Christ and Him crucified," which unites the soul with Christ through His Spirit, which introduces the soul into "newness of life," so that the believer is made a child and heir of God and a "joint heir with Christ." Faith he was to teach hereafter as the principle and inlet of the Divine and Christian life in the human soul. But this change entirely revolutionised the character and tenor of his ministry. To constrain, by the authority of Christ and his Church—by virtue, very mainly, of Church discipline and law—men and women to obey the requirements of the Church, had been his vocation heretofore; he had been an ecclesiastical magistrate, a disciplinary officer, a moral and ritual watchman, in the service of the Church; his work had been to carry out discipline and instruction in detail. But now he was to be something very different. It was to be his business to preach salvation through Christ

Jesus to all men. His first and chief work now was to point the way to Him. The rest would follow for those who repaired to Him. He was not to be a priest, observing, enforcing, carrying out a ritual; but like the Baptist, whose priestly office was merged in his great prophetic function, he was to be a herald and a witness whose one vocation was to direct sinners away from himself, from the Church, from all else whatsoever, to Christ, as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Faith henceforth was to be his doctrine; he was to teach that men are saved by faith. But "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." From this hour, accordingly, this ritualistic priest and ecclesiastical martinet was to be transformed into a flaming preacher of the great evangelical salvation and life in all its branches and its rich and varied experiences. Hence arose Wesleyan Methodism and all the Methodist Churches.

In his famous correspondence with Law, which took place during the period of his intercourse with Böhler, but before he had attained to peace through believing, and which I agree with Mr. Tyerman in thinking petulant and harsh, although I do not think it deserves to be denounced as "an intolerable

outrage,"\* Wesley has expressed very distinctly what he at the time regarded as being the essential defect of his faith up to the period of his receiving Böhler's instructions. His faith up to this time he describes as a "speculative notional shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart." He has also described very pointedly the sort of doctrine which, in contrast to his own conceptions heretofore, Böhler had insisted upon. "This faith, indeed," that "holy man" had told him, "is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thine own works, and fly to Him. 'For whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out.' " And his complaint against his former in-

\* Miss Wedgwood's observations on this correspondence are acute, and contain a measure of truth, although here as elsewhere she has misconceived Wesley's character as regards the point of insight and sympathy with particular minds. Wesley wrote as he did to Law because he believed himself to be bound both to God and man, and especially to Mr. Law, to do his utmost to point out to him, in full light, what he regarded as his most mischievous doctrinal defect and error. Wesley's manner of doing this was a remnant of his old hierarchical character and temper; a derivative from the views which he had held so long, and the influences under which his character for so many years had been moulded. It was not to be expected that the conscientious arrogance and dogmatism which such opinions as he had held cannot fail always to produce, should all at once pass away, even when he had begun to look away from his Church to his Saviour. If Wesley had not embraced the doctrines of grace, and salvation by faith, he must have retained, as his official temper, such arrogant austerity as he had already shown in

structor, is: "Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ? Never, so as to ground anything upon faith in his blood."

Miss Wedgwood has firmly grasped the significance of Wesley's experience at this critical period of his history. She reads aright the meaning, at least in general, of his experience during the voyage home, and she sees very distinctly the nature of the revolution in his views and aims which was effected by his conversion. "Wesley's homeward voyage in 1738," she says, "marks the conclusion of his High-Church period. He abated nothing of his attachment to the ordinances of the Church either then or to the last days of his life, and he did not so soon reach that degree of independence of her hierarchy and some of her rules which marks his furthest point of divergence; but his Journals during this voyage chronicle for us that deep dissatisfaction which is felt whenever an earnest nature wakes up to the incompleteness of a traditional religion; and his after life, compared with his two years in Georgia, makes it evident that he passed at this time into a new spiritual region. His Journals are marked by a depression which

Georgia, notwithstanding the brightness and candour of his natural disposition.

we never meet with again.”\* Having referred, a few pages further on, to the religious societies of which Dr. Woodward has left us an account, and which had preceded Methodism, Miss Wedgwood makes the following discriminating and acute observations: “The religious societies of the seventeenth century were in organization a feeblener and more liberal Methodism.† It was, however, only in organization that the two things were alike. The spirit of the older societies was not only unlike Methodism, but it was the very spirit from which Methodism was a reaction. They were distinctively *Church* bodies, and they belonged characteristically to the Church at that time; they embodied the principles of that party whose watchwords were virtue and vice, and who were not afraid to speak of the support of a good conscience, and of the everlasting rewards which ‘were worthy of all the care and toil which were to be spent in the pursuit of them.’ (*Dr. Woodward.*) The reader will at once appreciate the chasm which phrases like these indicate between the speakers and

\* “John Wesley,” p. 140.

† By “more liberal” Miss Wedgwood means “less strict.” But the observations which follow show that being *Church* societies, these less strict societies were ecclesiastically more exclusive, and therefore less “liberal.”

the school of Wesley. . . . Adherence to the church was no longer the *first* condition of membership in any society with which he was in sympathy. *The birthday of a Christian was already shifted from his baptism to his conversion, and in that change the partition line of two great systems is crossed.*"\*

The last sentence quoted admirably expresses the master-truth which explains the whole sequel of Wesley's life—which furnishes the key to the whole development of Wesleyan Methodism. Mr. Tyerman has given a full and excellent account of Wesley's religious experience during the whole of this critical period in his history; with the minuteness characteristic of a student and preacher of evangelical theology, he has exhibited on the surface of his pages those instructive fluctuations in Wesley's own views and experience, during the early months after his conversion, which Wesley himself sets forth fully in his Journals, and which show that Wesley's views respecting the nature of the Spirit's witness, and the character and extent of regeneration, were, as was to be expected, not fully defined or finally settled until some time after his conversion; and in particular, as Mr. Tyerman intimates, that

\* "John Wesley," p. 157.



they had been not a little disturbed and perplexed by what he had heard among the Moravians during his visit to them in Germany almost immediately after he had "found peace." But Mr. Tyerman fails to show the critical nature of the change which Wesley underwent through the teaching and instrumentality of Böhler. It is possible to maintain, that in a certain and a true sense of the word Wesley had been "converted"—that is, thoroughly and graciously awakened into sincere repentance—before he knew Böhler; but, nevertheless, what marked and made the absolute revolution in his mind and character, with all his prospects and motives, was his full acceptance of that doctrine of evangelical faith which the Moravian was the means of making known to his spiritual apprehension, and his embrace of the Saviour by that faith, as his own in ever-present virtue and plenitude. By making the most of Wesley's antecedent preparation of heart, and by laying too much stress on those fluctuations of spirit and of view, and those self-depreciatory statements respecting his own experience soon after his conversion, the like of which are so commonly found in the experience of humble and conscientious young converts, who, as yet, are necessarily wanting

in experience of spiritual difficulties, perplexities, and temptations, and whose natural but unwarranted expectations of settled joy and tranquillity have been painfully disappointed, it is possible to diminish the proportions and to obscure the relations of the great cardinal change in Wesley's spiritual character on which we have been dwelling. Miss Wedgwood, however, clearly sees the importance and the critical nature of that change, and has admirably stated it in the passage we have quoted. Wesley had embraced the cardinal doctrine of "salvation by faith." Now, to quote again the classical text which was quoted a short while ago, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In other words, the preaching of the truth of God, and not the administration of the sacraments as such, becomes to the evangelical believer the great means of spreading salvation—of conveying life to those who are in a state of spiritual death. Christians are to be "sanctified" by "the truth," even by the "word of God;" to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is not the sacraments, as rites duly administered, which of themselves, become spirit and life to the

recipient, but it is the truth in the sacraments spiritually apprehended and embraced, which fills them with blessing to the believer. The "expulsive power," accordingly, of the new principle which Wesley had embraced, could not but before long cast out the sacramental ritualism which had held him in bondage. He did not, of course, cast all his "graveclothes" off at once; but rapidly, though gradually, he did cast them away. Meantime he preached his new doctrine with new and startling power; and so entered upon that grand course of preaching which was to lay the foundation for all his organization—for his whole fellowship and "Connexion." Wesley the Ritualist was transformed into Wesley the Preacher. Wesleyan Methodism is derived, not from Wesley the Ritualist, but from Wesley the Preacher.

Let me here be permitted to quote some sentences which have already been published. "With Wesley's ritualism his High-Churchmanship could not but also wither away. A number of old and long customary prejudices and predilections—habits of thought and feeling which had become a second nature—still clung to him for awhile; but these dropped off one by one, until scarcely a vestige of them was left. All the irregularities of the Methodist leader; his renunciation of

Church-bigotry and exclusiveness ; his partial, but progressive and fundamental, separation from the Church which imposed shackles on his evangelical activities, and frowned upon his converts, and the ultimate separation, in due sequence, of the Church he had founded from the Church in which he was nurtured : all these results were involved in this change. Newman renounced justification by faith, and clung to apostolic succession, therefore he went to Rome ; Wesley embraced justification by faith, and renounced apostolic succession, therefore his people are a separate people from the Church of England.”\*

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\* See “London Quarterly Review,” vol. xxx. (July, 1866), pp. 293-4. Also, my “Relations of John Wesley and Wesleyan Methodism to the Church of England.” Second Edition, p. 39.

## CHAPTER III.

### WESLEY THE PREACHER.

WE must now turn from Wesley the Ritualist to Wesley the Preacher. In this character he is, perhaps, quite as little known, as little really understood at the present day, as in his character as a thinker, to which I shall soon have to advert. His character as an organizer has usurped public attention to such an extent as quite to obscure his character as a preacher. And yet, as I have intimated, the foundation of all his power and success as an organizer was laid in his power and success as a preacher. He was, in simple truth, the most awakening and spiritually penetrative and powerful preacher of his age. Whitefield was more dramatic, but less intense ; more pictorial, but less close and forcible ; less incisive and conclusive. In Wesley's calmer discourses, lucid and engaging exposition laid the basis for close and searching application. In his more intense utterances, logic and passion were fused into a white heat of mingled argument, denunciation, and appeal, often of a most personal

searchingness, often overwhelming in its vehement home-thrusts. Some idea may be gained as to the character of his most earnest preaching from his "Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion," especially the latter portions of the first of these, and from his celebrated "Sermon on Free Grace."

I am, of course, aware that the intimation I have now given of the character of Wesley's preaching will surprise some, even of my well-informed readers, and that it is not in accordance with the popular conception of his preaching. It is many years since the late Dr. James Hamilton, in an article in the "North British Review," gave pictorial expression in his own vivid way, to the mistaken idea which has grown up in some quarters respecting Wesley as a preacher. He sketched him as, "after his morning sermon at the Foundery, mounting his pony, and trotting, and chatting, and gathering simples, till he reached some country hamlet, where he would bait his charger, and talk through a little sermon with the villagers, and remount his pony and trot away again." A more unfounded and misleading specimen of fancy-painting than this it would be impossible to imagine; and one can only wonder where good James Hamilton picked up the ideas or the fictitious informa-

tion which he deliberately put into this written form. He was altogether at fault in his picture. As Wesley was, during the greater part of his life, simply the most assiduous horseman, and one of the most spirited of riders, in the kingdom, riding ordinarily sixty miles (let it be remembered what the roads were in the middle of the last century) day by day, besides preaching twice or thrice, and not seldom riding eighty or ninety miles in the day; so, for many years, Wesley was frequently a long preacher—was often one of the longest preachers of whom I have ever read or heard—and never stinted himself of time when the feeling of the congregation seemed to invite him to enlarge, and when opportunity favoured. Of course, however, he preached at all times many more short sermons than long ones, because he preached commonly three times every week day, and four or five times on the Sunday, and because his earlier sermons on the Sunday needed to be over in time for his hearers to attend Church-service. But when he preached after Church hours, whether in the afternoon or the later evening, and on special occasions even on the week evening, he was, as I have said, for many years often a very long preacher. Let me give some instances of this,

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only premising that all the special instances of protracted preaching which I am about to cite occurred after Wesley had taken to field-preaching. He had been an earnest, and not unfrequently a long preacher before: but it was not until he began to address crowds of thousands in the open air that his larger and grander powers as a preacher were called forth.

About sixteen or seventeen months after his conversion, Wesley writes in his Journal as follows, under date October 7th, 1739, (Sunday):—

“Between five and six I called upon all who were present (about three thousand) at Stanley,\* on a little green, near the town, to accept of Christ as their only ‘wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.’ I was strengthened to speak as I never did before, and continued speaking near two hours; the darkness of the night and a little lightning not lessening the number, but increasing the seriousness of the hearers.”

Wesley had already, before this service, preached three times on that day; and he preached yet once after it, “concluding the day” by “expounding part of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount to a small, serious company at Ebly.” Five services, therefore,

\* Near Stroud.



that day, and among them one in which his sermon alone was nearly two hours long !

On Friday, the 19th of the same month, Wesley preached at Newport, in Monmouthshire, in the morning, and coming to Cardiff about the middle of the day he preached in the Shire Hall twice—in the afternoon at four and again at six in the evening. He had a large congregation—"almost the whole town"—and preaching from the six last beatitudes, he says, "My heart was so enlarged I knew not how to give over, so that we continued three hours." On Sunday, June 13th 1742, he preached in Epworth churchyard—his own and his father's Epworth—standing on his father's tomb, and continued the service "for near three hours." This was his fourth service that day. On Wednesday, May 24th, 1745,\* at Birstal, he "was constrained to continue his discourse *near an hour longer than usual*, God pouring out such a blessing that he knew not how to leave off." On Whit Sunday, the 14th of May, 1749, at Limerick, he began to preach at five, in the morning and, there being no liturgy and no lesson, but only the simplest service, three short singings, one short prayer, and a final benediction, besides the sermon, he yet kept the congregation till near seven,

\* The anniversary of his conversion.

“hardly knowing how the time went.” At Whitehaven, on a Saturday evening in September,\* 1749, he preached from six to eight—a simple week-night service—which must have implied a sermon of not less than an hour and a quarter long; and at eight he met the Society. These instances may suffice to show how Wesley enlarged under special influences. Even when he was more than seventy years of age, he sometimes, on a week-night evening, was so drawn out as to “preach a full hour” in the open air—as for instance, in the market-place of Caermarthen on the 21st of August, 1777.

In the article to which I have referred it was said, that while Wesley could “talk through a little sermon with the villagers,” he “seldom coped with the multitude.” In the “Wesleyan Methodist Magazine” for December, 1847, will be found a paper from the pen of the venerable Thomas Jackson, who died in 1873, in the ninetieth year of his age, which examines and reproves the errors of that article. Mr. Jackson thus deals with the point now under notice:—

“That he preached, to ‘villagers,’ so as to be understood by them, as his blessed Lord had done, will not be denied; but that he

\* September 23rd.

‘seldom coped with the multitude,’ is notoriously at variance with fact. No man was accustomed to address larger multitudes, or with greater success. At Moorfields, Kennington Common, Kingswood, Bristol, Newcastle, in Cornwall, Staffordshire, and Yorkshire, immense multitudes of people were accustomed to congregate around him through a long series of years, and that with undiminished interest; and it may be fairly questioned, whether any minister in modern ages has been instrumental in effecting a greater number of conversions. He possessed all the essential requisites of a great preacher; and in nothing was he inferior to his eminent friend and contemporary, except in voice and manner. In respect of matter, language, and arrangement, his sermons were vastly superior to those of Mr. Whitefield. Those persons who judge of Mr. Wesley’s ministry from the sermons which he preached and published in the decline of life, greatly mistake his real character. Till he was enfeebled by age, his discourses were not at all remarkable for their brevity. They were often extended to a considerable length, as we learn from his Journal; and yet, according to his oft-repeated statements, he did not know how to

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leave off and dismiss the people, for his mind was full of evangelical matter, and his heart was richly charged with heavenly zeal. In a sense higher than ever entered into the thoughts of Archimedes, as he himself states, he was often ready to exclaim, when addressing vast multitudes in his Master's name, 'Give me the where to stand and I will move the world ! ' "

Such is the testimony of Thomas Jackson, the author of the full and admirable " Life of Charles Wesley," and the very accurate editor of Wesley's voluminous Works ; who was himself born before the death of Wesley ; who made all that related to him his life-study ; who knew well some of the men who had known Wesley best ; and who should himself have accomplished for the life of John Wesley what he has so excellently done as the biographer of Charles. The case being as Mr. Jackson has stated it, and as the extracts from the Journal, which have been given, prove it to have been, it is proper to explain how the erroneous ideas which have been current as to the character of his preaching have originated. Three causes may be assigned to account for them. One is hinted at by Mr. Jackson in the extract we have

given. Mr. Wesley's was a very long life. Those of his people who had known him in his prime of strength and energy had died before himself. The traditions as to his preaching, which have been current during the last half century, have been mostly derived from those who had only heard him in his extreme old age, and, in many instances, on his hasty visits from place to place, when he would preach at seven o'clock on the week-night evening, or at five o'clock in the morning. But another, and, perhaps, more influential cause has been, that an inference as to the length and style of his spoken sermons has been erroneously drawn from his published sermons. How unwarranted any such inference must be, may be shown by a remark of his elder brother Samuel, made at the very beginning of Wesley's preaching career, and before he had begun field-preaching. In a letter addressed to Charles Wesley, but which refers to both the brothers, Samuel says, under date December 1st, 1738 : "There is a most monstrous appearance of dishonesty among you ; your sermons are generally three quarters of an hour or an hour long in the pulpit, but when printed are short snips ; rather notes than sermons."\*

\* Jackson's "Life of Charles Wesley," p. 151.

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If this was the case so soon after the brothers had broken away from the bondage of sermon-reading in the pulpit, it is certain that, in after years, except in special cases—such as a sermon to be preached before the University—Wesley's written sermons, which were ordinarily compositions having a definite purpose of theological statement and definition, must be regarded as altogether different in character from his preached sermons, delivered extempore, often after little or no written preparation. Wesley the preacher was tethered by no lines of written preparation and verbal recollection; he spoke with extraordinary power of utterance out of the fullness of his heart. Still another cause of the error I have been exposing must probably be found in the urgency with which Wesley, in various places, enjoins on his preachers, as a rule, to preach short, and the emphatic way in which he insists to them on the evils of long preaching. But it must be remembered that the great majority of Wesley's preachers were men whose stock of knowledge was very small, and who had received no intellectual training whatever. They resembled the plainest and most fervid of the Methodist Local-preachers or exhorters of to-day. The same rule could not be

applicable to him as to them. But, indeed, the great Methodist preachers of Wesley's life-time—his most powerful lay helpers—were, as a matter of fact, none of them short preachers, while most of them were often, if not usually, very long preachers. Such were Walsh, and Bradburn, and Benson, and Clarke.

The fact, at any rate, is as I have stated it, so far as respects the preaching of Wesley ; and although I have carefully abstained hitherto, and must still abstain, from being entangled in this study with the thread of Charles Wesley's life, closely associated as he was with his brother, yet, I may add in passing, that for not a few years Charles Wesley was as long and often as powerful a preacher, even as he was as hard-riding and hard-working an itinerant evangelist, as his brother John.

In showing that Wesley, instead of being a talker of neat little sermons, was, in his prime of life, frequently a long preacher, and sometimes one of the longest preachers of whom we have any knowledge, I have not only shown how mistaken has been the popular tradition respecting his special characteristics as a preacher, but I have also proved that there must have been a remark-

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able charm about his preaching. None but a very eloquent speaker could have held thousands of people intently listening to him for two or three hours together in the open air. I have to add that, as I have already intimated, he was a singularly powerful preacher. Southey has given conclusive evidence as to this point, in the interesting chapter in the first volume of his biography of Wesley, entitled, "Scenes of Itinerancy." No one, indeed, has done such justice as Southey to Wesley's gifts as a preacher. Not only in the "Life of Wesley," but in "The Doctor," and in his "Commonplace Book," he has given evidence of the careful study and the full appreciation with which he has realized the preaching powers of Wesley. The able and eloquent American historian, Stevens, does not appear to have been able to understand the secret of Wesley's special power, but he gives some striking instances to show how great that power was. "In the midst of a mob, 'I called,' Wesley writes, 'for a chair; the winds were hushed, and all was calm and still; my heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed; they were ashamed; they were melted down; they devoured every word.' That," says Dr. Stevens, "must have



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been genuine eloquence.”\* Doubtless it was, and the very words—the vivid, affecting style of the description here quoted from Wesley himself—may serve to intimate what was part of his special power as a speaker.

Like many terse, nervous writers, Wesley was not only a nervous but a copious speaker. His words flowed in a direct, steady, powerful, sometimes a rapid stream, and every word told, because every word bore its proper meaning. With all the fulness of utterance, the genuine eloquence, there was no tautology, no diffuseness of style, no dilution. Close logical, high verbal, adequate philosophic culture had, in the case of Wesley, laid the basis of clear, vivid, direct, and copious extempore powers of speech. Culture and discipline, such as had prepared Cicero for his oratorical successes, helped to make Wesley the powerful, persuasive, at times the thrilling and electrifying, preacher which he undoubtedly was.

What a picture is that given of the effects of Wesley's preaching in connection with his famous visit to Epworth! For eight evenings in succession, in that splendid early summer season, he preached to vast crowds from his father's tomb, and his last discourse was his

\* Stevens' "History of Methodism," book v. chap. xii.

most powerful and prolonged, and was addressed to the largest multitude. The circumstance, however, to which I refer took place not on the last day of his preaching, but the day immediately preceding (Saturday, June 12th, 1742). "While I was speaking, several dropped down as dead; and among the rest such a cry was heard of sinners groaning for the righteousness of faith, as almost drowned my voice." "I observed a gentleman there who was remarkable for not pretending to be of any religion at all. I was informed he had not been at public worship of any kind for upwards of thirty years. Seeing him stand as motionless as a statue, I asked him abruptly, 'Sir, are you a sinner?' He replied with a deep and broken voice, 'Sinner enough;' and continued staring upward till his wife and a servant or two, who were all in tears, put him into his chaise and carried him home." The stricken, staring, statue-like master, the weeping wife and servants—what a picture, I say, have we here!

That Wesley's preaching was attended by more powerful and penetrating immediate results than that of any of his famous contemporary Methodist preachers, is notorious; but it has been thought difficult to understand

this. He was not, as I have said, a pictorial or dramatic preacher, like his great preaching contemporary, Whitefield; but whereas Whitefield, powerful preacher as he was, was yet more popular than powerful, Wesley, popular preacher as he was, was yet more powerful in comparison with his fellows than he was popular.

There is really, however, no special mystery about the power of Wesley's preaching. All we know of his earlier preaching, under special circumstances, would lead to the conclusion that he could not but be a singularly powerful preacher. His invariable terseness of phrase and style prevented him from ever being tedious. His full and ready flow of thoughts, as well as of fit words, carried his audience with him. He was most pleasant in manner, pellucid in statement, fresh and lively throughout, and so frequent, so continuous, I might almost say, in his personal application of what he was saying, making his doctrine to tell at every point throughout his discourse, that he never allowed the attention of his congregation to slumber. The celebrated Kennicott, at that time an undergraduate at Oxford, heard Wesley preach his last sermon before the University, in 1744, a flaming, searching,

intrepidly faithful sermon. Apart from its severity, he admired the sermon greatly, and was evidently very much impressed by the personality of the preacher. "His black hair," he says, "quite smooth, and parted very exactly, added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man." He speaks of his "agreeable emphasis" in reading. He refers with approval to "many just invectives" in his sermon, but with disapproval to "the zeal and unbounded satire with which he fired his address when he came to what he called his plain, practical conclusion." If "his censures" had only been "moderated," and certain portions omitted, Kennicott says, "I think his discourse, as to style and delivery, would have been uncommonly pleasing to others as well as to myself." He adds, "He is allowed to be a man of great parts."\*

Cowper's lines on Wesley will not be forgotten while we are on the subject of his preaching. They were written when the fire and flame of Wesley's early manhood were long gone by. He speaks of him as one—

"Who, when occasion justified its use,  
Had wit as bright as ready to produce;  
Could fetch from records of an earlier age,

\* Tyerman's "Wesley," vol. i. p. 449.

Or from Philosophy's enlightened page,  
His rich materials, and regale your ear  
With strains it was a privilege to hear.  
Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,  
And his chief glory was the Gospel theme :  
There he was copious as old Greece or Rome,  
His happy eloquence seemed there at home ;  
Ambitious not to shine or to excel,  
But to treat justly what he loved so well."

I apprehend that the last four lines give a most true and happy description of Wesley's ordinary ministry, while Kennicott's description enables us in some measure to understand the fire and intensity which characterized his preaching on special occasions, and in the prime of his life.

- Dr. Stevens has dwelt on the authority with which Wesley spoke, the calm command which belonged to his presence and gave weight and force to his words. No doubt there was this characteristic always about Wesley's person and presence. In the former part of this volume I have quoted Gambold's testimony to this effect, in regard to Wesley in his early Oxford days. Calm, serene, methodical as Wesley was, there was a deep, steadfast fire of earnest purpose about him ; and, notwithstanding the smallness of his stature, there was an elevation of character and of bearing visible to all with whom he

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had intercourse, which gave him a wonderful power of command, however quiet were his words, and however placid his deportment. But the extraordinary power of his preaching, while it owed something, no doubt, to this tone and presence of calm, unconscious authority, was due mainly, essentially, to the searching and importunate closeness and fidelity with which he dealt with the consciences of his hearers, and the passionate vehemence with which he urged and entreated them to turn to Christ and be saved. He had not the "gift of tears," as Whitefield had, or as Charles Wesley had, whose preaching appears to have been, in several respects, intermediate in character between that of his brother John and of his friend Whitefield; yet Wesley was often moved to tears as he pleaded with his hearers, and oftener still was the means of moving multitudes that heard him to tears. At times, however, his onset in applying his subject to the lives, the cases, the consciences of his hearers, was too intense, too direct, too electrical to be answered by tears. His words went with a sudden and startling shock straight home into the very core of the guilty sinner's consciousness and heart, and cries, shrieks, sudden fits, cases of fainting and insensibility, men and women

“dropping down as dead,” as if they had been physically struck by a blow from some terrible engine, by a stone from a catapult, or a ball from a cannon, were the frequent consequence. And yet it was not that Wesley used stronger words than other preachers; not that he used high word-colouring or exaggerated expressions; the contrary was the case. Rather, it was that, using simpler and fewer words than others to express the truth—going straighter to his purpose, and with less word-foliage, less verbiage, to shroud or overshadow his meaning—the real, essential truth was more easily and directly seen and felt by the hearer. There was less of human art or device; the language was simpler and more transparent; and so the truth shone more clearly and fully through. There was less in language of what “man’s wisdom teacheth;” less of what was fanciful, or elaborate, or artificial, and therefore there was more of the Spirit’s operation; more of “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” So far as any mere written composition can give an idea of how Wesley preached, when his aim was specially to convince and awaken, perhaps his last sermon before the University, to which I have lately referred, and the wonderful “applications” contained in his

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first "Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," which I have before mentioned, may help us to such an idea; but it must always be remembered, that no written compositions can really approach the energy and directness with which Wesley preached when vast crowds hung upon his lips, to whom he was declaring as in Epworth church-yard, "the whole counsel of God."

Of the clear, strong, intense style in which Wesley could, if he felt it to be necessary, combine doctrinal argument with declamatory invective of the most scathing terribleness, we have an instance in his famous sermon on "Free Grace." But for the publication of that sermon, we should at the present time have had no conception of what his powers were in that kind; and it was owing only to very special circumstances, and much against his liking, that Wesley felt himself constrained to publish that sermon.

It is well known that Dr. Johnson had a great reverence for Wesley, and much enjoyed his society. In a letter to Wesley himself, he compliments him as "Plato." Cowper, also, in the lines we have quoted, refers to Wesley's power in social conversation, of bringing forth the treasures of ancient philosophy. Let any competent judge read the plainly written but



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elevated and beautiful sermon on "The Original of the Law," mentioned some pages back, and he will at once recognize the impress of a mind which, while it avoided all display of learning, was deeply imbued with the training and results of philosophy—of the highest and best philosophy, whether ancient or modern—so far as philosophy had advanced in Wesley's day.

Wesley had been an excellent preacher of his kind, though not as yet evangelical, before he went to America. His beautiful sermon on the "Circumcision of the heart," preached before the University of Oxford in 1733, is one of several sermons included in his Works, which afford decisive evidence on this point. His style, also—a style which the best judges, such as Southey, have agreed in greatly admiring, and which, indeed, no one who understands and loves clear, pure, pleasant English can fail to admire—seems to have been already formed at that period, although its full power was not as yet developed; it was awaiting development under the inspiration of full Christian tenderness and zeal. But it was not until after he had become Böhler's disciple, that, for reasons already stated, preaching came to be recognized and felt by himself to be his great work,

or that the characteristic power of his preaching was brought out. It was his perception of the doctrine of salvation by faith which not only transformed him thereafter into a preacher, as his first and greatest calling, but which also breathed a new soul into his preaching. When he began to preach this doctrine, his hearers generally felt that a new power accompanied his preaching; and, at the same time, the clergy and the orthodox Pharisaic hearers felt that a dangerous, startling, revolutionary doctrine was being proclaimed. Wherever he preached crowds flowed, in larger and larger volume, to hear him; but, at the same time, church after church was shut against him. As Gambold wrote in a letter to Wesley, it is the doctrine of salvation by faith, which seems to constitute the special offence of the cross. This, at any rate, in Wesley's days, was the one doctrine which clergymen and orthodox church-goers would not endure. Short of this almost anything might be preached, but on no account this. The University of Oxford would endure the high doctrine as to Christian attainment and consecration taught in the sermon on "The Circumcision of the Heart," but it would not endure the doctrine of salvation by faith, which, ten years later, the same preacher

would have set forth before his University. The reason would seem to be twofold: the evangelical doctrine of salvation by faith strips men altogether of their own righteousness, laying them all low at the same level in presence of God's holiness and of Christ's atonement, as needing Divine pardon and Divine renewal; and it also teaches the "real presence" of the Divine Spirit, insists upon the present supernatural power of God to inspire repentance and faith, and to renew the soul, the present supernatural power of Jesus Christ to save the sinner. Such a doctrine is "spiritual;" it enforces the living power and presence of spiritual realities; it is accordingly "foolishness," and "a stumbling-block" to the "natural man." The "natural man" receiveth not these "things of the Spirit of God." The doctrine of high Christian holiness may be regarded as but another, and the highest, form of moral philosophy, of select and virtuous Christian culture. The doctrine of salvation by faith, through grace, is one which humbles utterly the pride of the human understanding, and of merely human virtue. It was when Wesley became the preacher of this doctrine that he became a truly and fully Christian preacher. It was not a new doctrine; it was the

doctrine of the Apostles, the Reformers, and even of the Homilies and Formularies of the Church of England itself; but in a sense-bound and heartless age it had been almost utterly forgotten. To revive it by the ordinance of preaching became henceforth Wesley's great life-work. He became, above all things, himself a preacher, and he founded a preaching institute; with preaching, however, always associating close personal and individual fellowship.

The whole of Methodism unfolded from this beginning. To promote preaching and fellowship was the one work; fellowship including a perpetual individual testimony of Christian believers as to salvation by grace, through faith. Preaching and fellowship—this was all from first to last; true preaching, and true, vital, Christian fellowship, which involved opposition to untrue preaching, and to fellowship not truly and fully Christian. From this unfolded all Wesley's life and history. His union for a season with the Moravians, and then his separation from them, when their teaching became for the time mixed up and entangled with demoralising error; the foundation of his own Society—that of “the people called Methodists;” his separation from his brother Whitefield and

from Calvinism ; his field-preachings ; his separate meeting-houses and separate communions ; his class-meetings, and band-meetings, and all the discipline of his Society ; his Conference and his brotherhood of itinerant Methodist preachers ; his increasing irregularities as a Churchman ; his ordinations, and the virtual though not formal or voluntary separation of his Societies from the Church of England ; all resulted from the same beginning—from his embracing “the doctrine of salvation by faith”—from his receiving the instructions of Peter Böhler, the Moravian minister.

Into these matters I cannot venture in this volume. They demand separate treatment. The personal character and inner humanity of the man Wesley is my theme. I shall now turn to his intellectual character ; a subject to which, so far as I know, no writer has as yet done justice, and which is still more misconceived, perhaps, than the style and character of his preaching.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### WESLEY AS A THINKER.

BECAUSE Wesley was eminently a man of action, it seems to have been inferred by some writers that he was not a man of contemplation: he is admitted to have been an acute logician, but he is represented as having been comparatively wanting in the capacity of philosophic reflectiveness. I have no wish to exaggerate Wesley's philosophical capacity; but it is an entire mistake to suppose him to have been at all wanting either in the taste or the capacity for philosophic study and reflection. His intellectual tastes inclined him very strongly to the study, not only of languages, but of philosophy and theology—of philosophy, perhaps, hardly less than theology. I have had occasion already to furnish one instance of his philosophic taste and capacity. His Journals supply abundant evidence that, in the midst of his life of incessant activity and absorbing care, and devotional intensity of feeling, he yet kept up his interest in philosophic studies. He read and criticised Locke

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with acute intelligence. He not only read, but explained to his preachers, Bishop Browne's great work on "The Procedure of the Human Understanding," preferring Browne to Locke. In his letters to Mr. John Smith, he says, that "in the midst of all his labours he had abundantly more temptation to be a saunterer *inter sylvas academicas*, a *philosophical sluggard*, than an itinerant preacher." His reflectiveness, indeed, tended even to scepticism. In the same remarkable letters, he says that "he had a thousand times doubted of the divinity of the Scriptures after the fullest assurance preceding."

In his sermon on "The Good Steward," he uses the striking language which we are about to quote :—

"It is so far from being true that there is no knowledge after we have quitted the body, that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then ; whether it be not a plain, sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction, that

" ' All these are shadows, which for things we take,  
Are but the empty dreams which in death's sleep we make,'

only excepting those things which God Himself had been pleased to reveal to man. I will speak for one. After having sought the

truth with some diligence for half a century, I am, at this day, hardly sure of anything but what I learn from the Bible. Nay, I positively affirm that I know nothing else so certainly that I would dare to stake my salvation upon it.”\*

It was, in fact, the strength of the contemplative element in Wesley which largely helped, during not a few years of his earlier life, to give mysticism so considerable a power over him. He loved his college, and his cloister, and his “academic groves:” he loved

“To join with him calm Peace and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet;  
And add to these retired Leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;  
But first, and chiefest, with him bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
The cherub Contemplation.”

He seems to have had little love for any philosophy that had not an element of mysticism in it; he would

“Unsphere

The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
What worlds or what vast regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.”

\* Here, again, we are struck with that resemblance and yet contrast between Wesley and Newman to which I have referred already. Substitute merely “the Church” for “the Bible,” in the above extract, and it expresses fully the views of the author of the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and of the “Grammar of Assent.” All hinged upon Wesley’s accepting Scripture teaching instead of traditional influence and prescription.



He found delight in Tauler's philosophic and mystical theology, and in Madame de Bourignon's poetry. It is true, he was of a very social temper, also, when he could find congenial companions; and this balanced his recluseness. It is also true, that while his mere intellect and his tastes craved for solitude or select society, his moral sensibilities and his conscience continually prompted him to go abroad and minister to bodily and spiritual need and distress; but that did not annul the other side of his nature. It was, doubtless, the strong contemplative element in Wesley which formed so close a link between himself and his friend Gambold, who was first a Methodist, then a Mystic, and then a Moravian, and always predisposed to Quietism. Wesley was very fond of Gambold's poetry—poetry of superior merit and of great refinement, marked especially by a subtle and spiritualistic philosophic tendency—and he not seldom quotes it.

I have quoted Wesley's own words in regard to the philosophical scepticism which was a leading feature of his intellectual character. So conscious was he of his tendency to scepticism that he was afraid, as he tells us, to prosecute the study of mathematics because he found it to undermine his

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faith in all moral conclusions. He was one of the keenest and most sceptical of historical critics, as I shall immediately show; but, like Dr. Johnson, while acutely and intrepidly critical in regard to matters which he conceived to lie fully within the scope of his critical understanding and faculty, he durst not carry the same temper of mind, or assume the same right of critical judgment, in regard to the world of spiritual powers and realities. The principle on which he acted in judging of things pertaining to the world of consciousness, and of invisible spirits and forces, he himself explains in his comments on a certain case which he records in his Journal. I give his words:—

“One of the strangest accounts I ever read; yet I can find no pretence to disbelieve it. The well-known character of the person excludes all suspicion of fraud; and the nature of the circumstances themselves excludes the possibility of delusion. It is true, there are several of them which I do not comprehend; but this with me is a very slender objection; for what is it which I do comprehend, even of the things I see daily? Truly not ‘the smallest grain of sand or spire of grass.’ I know not how the one grows, or how the particles of the other

cohere together. What pretence, then, have I to deny well-attested facts, because I cannot comprehend them? " \*

Thus did the philosophical sceptic justify what religious sceptics stigmatised as his credulity. On the other hand, he was not slow to retort against the sceptics of his day the charge of credulity as respected common mundane things.

In historical criticism, Wesley was fifty years in advance of his age ; many illustrations might be given to show how penetrating, independent, and impartial, were his views as a student of history. He recognized fully and immediately the merits of Hook's "Roman History," pronouncing it far the best he had seen. He says, "I admire him for doing justice to many great men who have been generally misrepresented ; Manlius Capitolinus, in particular, as well as the two Gracchi." At the same time he objects that "he recites at large the senseless tales of Clelia swimming the Tiber, Mucius, Scævola, and twenty more ; and afterward knocks them all on the head. What need, then, of reciting them ? We want history, not romance, though compiled by Livy himself." †

"To-day," he says, "I read upon the road

\* "Works," vol. iv. p. 279.

† *Ibid.*, p. 363.

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a very agreeable book, Mr. Dobb's 'Universal History.' . . . But I still doubt of many famous incidents which have passed current for many ages. To instance one: I cannot believe there was ever such a nation as the Amazons in the world. The whole affair of the Argonauts I judge to be equally fabulous, as Mr. Bryant has shown many parts of ancient history to be; and no wonder, considering how allegories and poetic fables have been mistaken for real histories."\*

"I read to day," he writes (April 25th, 1748), "what is accounted the most correct history of St. Patrick that is extant; and, on the maturest consideration, I was much inclined to believe that St. Patrick and St. George were of one family. The whole story smells strongly of romance. To touch only on a few particulars:—I object to his first setting out; the Bishop of Rome had no such power in the beginning of the fifth century as this account supposes; nor would his uncle, the Bishop of Tours, have sent him in that age to Rome for a commission to convert Ireland, having himself as much authority over that land as any Italian bishop whatever. Again, I never heard before of an apostle sleeping thirty-five years, and beginning to

\* "*Works*," vol. iii, p. 672.

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preach at threescore. But his success staggers me the most of all: no blood of the martyrs is here; no reproach, no scandal of the cross; no persecution to those that will live godly. Nothing is to be heard of, from the beginning to the end, but kings, nobles, warriors, bowing down before him. Thousands are converted, without any opposition at all; twelve thousand at one sermon. If these things were so, either there was then no devil in the world, or St. Patrick did not preach the Gospel of Christ.”\*

In a similar spirit of wholesome critical scepticism he comments on Dr. Leland’s “History of Ireland,” repudiating altogether the notion that the Irish “were ever a civilized nation, till they were civilized by the English.” He is bold enough to deny that “Ireland was, in the seventh or eighth century, the grand seat of learning;” and especially singles out as incredible the pretence that in the college at Armagh, one of the “many famous colleges” of the island, there were seven thousands students. All this he “ranks with the history of ‘Bel and the Dragon.’”†

On the page following these remarks he quotes with approval his friend Dr. Byrom’s explanation of the origin of the name of

\* “Works,” vol. iii. p. 423. † *Ibid.*, p. 399.

England's patron saint. "I think," he says, "that there can be no reasonable doubt of the truth of his conjecture that Georgius is a mistake for Gregorius; that the real patron of England is St. Gregory, (who sent Austin, the monk, to convert England,) and that St. George (whom no one knows) came in by a mere blunder."\*

I do not by any means intend to adopt or vouch for all Wesley's criticisms; I wish only to show the critical quality of his intellect. His whole treatment of the History of England, of which he wrote himself a succinct epitome, was distinguished by remarkable independence of mind. He held to the side of Horace Walpole in his "Historic Doubts," so far as respected the character of Richard III. He gave up, after investigation, the strong prejudices of his youth in favour of "the Martyr" (Charles I.), and when his brother Charles, in a letter, remonstrated with him on this account, his reply was that he could not "in conscience say less evil of him." High Tory as he was by nurture and education, he not only revised, but altogether changed, his views respecting the controversies of Charles the Second's reign. Referring to Baxter's life he says, in his

\* "Works," vol. iii. p. 400.

Journal, "In spite of all the prejudice of education, I could not but see that the poor Nonconformists had been used without either justice or mercy; and that many of the Protestant bishops of King Charles had neither more religion nor humanity than the Popish bishops of Queen Mary."\* And again he says, referring to the persecutions of the Presbyterians in Scotland, "O what a blessed governor was that good-natured man, so-called, King Charles the Second! Bloody Queen Mary was a lamb, a mere dove, in comparison of him!"† Candour pure and impartial, perfect honesty of purpose in research and in judging, incorruptible love of truth, this is the prime and highest qualification in an historian or an historical critic. More than anything else, it helps to the attainment of the truth in history. This quality John Wesley possessed—pure and fearless honesty and candour.

Wesley himself, as I have said, often laughed at the credulity of his sceptical contemporaries. He criticises severely, and in some detail, the Abbé Raynal's "History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the Indies." He stigmatizes "several of his assertions as false in fact," singling out in

\* "Works," vol. iii. p. 568.

† *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 271.

particular the assertion that Batavia is a healthy place. He declares that his account of China is "pure romance, flowing from the Abbé's fruitful brain." He "supposes" that the account of the Peruvian nation is taken from "that pretty novel of 'Marmontel.'" He inquires if "many of his assertions do not so border upon the marvellous, that none but a disciple of Voltaire could swallow them, as the account of milk-white men, with no hair, red eyes, and the understanding of a monkey."\*

He was very keen in his criticism of all contemporary books of travel, very suspicious of "travellers' stories." In the bosom of "the lovely family at Balham," he writes, "I had leisure on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to consider thoroughly the account of the Pelew Islands. It is ingenious, but I esteem it a dangerous book. . . . I cannot believe that there is such a heathen on earth as Abba Thulle, much less such a heathen nation as is here painted. 'But what do you think of Prince Lee Boo?' I think he was a good-natured, sensible young man, who came to England with Captain Wilson, and had learned his lesson well; but just as much a prince as Tomo Chachi was a king."† This entry was made within about fifteen

\* "Works," vol. iv. pp. 113, 114. *Ibid.*, p. 456.



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months of Wesley's death, when he was eighty-six years old.

It was impossible that such a thinker as has now been described could be in any sense a narrow Christian. Dean Stanley has, I believe, claimed Wesley as being, in some sort, the father of modern Broad Churchmanship; and, although Wesley's theology was not by any means in harmony with that of our Broad Church leaders, being thoroughly evangelical, there is some colour of plausibility in the claim. Wesley was a very large-souled and loving-hearted Arminian. He insisted on the heart and the life as the seat and test of Christian character, not on the creed. "I read," he says, "to-day part of the meditations of Marcus Antoninus. What a strange Emperor! And what a strange heathen! Giving thanks to God for all the good things he enjoyed, in particular for his good inspiration and for twice revealing to him in dreams things whereby he was cured of otherwise incurable distempers. I make no doubt but this is one of those 'many' who shall 'come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' while 'the children of the Kingdom'—nominal Christians—are 'shut out.' "\*"

\* Journal, October 11th, 1745.

## CHAPTER V.

### WESLEY'S DISPOSITION AND CHARACTER.

I HAVE said thus much of Wesley's intellectual characteristics, because, so far as I know, justice has never been done to them. No biographer has brought out the side of his character on which I have last dwelt. As to his accomplishments as a linguist, in which few men in England excelled him—as a logician—as a poetical critic of remarkably true and severe taste, and as himself no mean poet—as to his temper, skill, and admirable talents as a controversialist—his powers as a theologian—and his eminent merits as one of the purest and best writers of English in his own or any age—I say nothing. These subjects have been amply dealt with by others.

It is not necessary, however, to deny that in listening to men's own statements about themselves, Wesley's charity was so extreme as fairly to lay him open to the charge of credulity. On his properly intellectual side he was, as I have shown, no more credulous than Dr. Johnson or Father Newman. On the side of charitable hopes and judgments he

may have been open to the charge. His brother Charles, somewhere in his Journal, writes that John "was born for the benefit of knaves." John hardly denied the impeachment. When it was necessary to investigate or to watch and study a suspicious case, he would send for his brother Charles to come and assist him. The greater suspiciousness of his brother, and his occasionally keener penetration and insight into personal character, were of advantage by the side of John's unsuspecting confidence. Nevertheless we have it on John's own distinct testimony, that, after all, he was more seldom deceived in his estimate of men, and more seldom betrayed by them, than his brother Charles. He had, in fact, and in no ordinary measure, precisely what Miss Wedgwood thinks that he was lacking in—great faculty of sympathy and insight, as respected individuals; always, however, seeing more directly and fully the good or the capacity of good in them than the evil. He was necessarily, indeed, to a very large extent, an absorbed and preoccupied man. He had no leisure to give his mind to trifles, and sometimes, especially in his earlier years, omitted to relate to those interested, pleasant and proper intelligence respecting

friends or relatives. But this was not owing to any real want of keen and ready sympathy with others. He was, by the testimony of all who knew him—of such witnesses as his friend and follower, Henry Moore, and as his friend, the Irish Churchman, Alexander Knox, (a man of high culture and gifts,)—one of the most pleasant, sunny, sociable of companions, although he could not give more than two hours at a time to Dr. Johnson, who highly esteemed him and his society, whereat the great dictator was sorely disappointed and chagrined.

Wesley was a quick-tempered man, and sometimes, in his haste, said sharp things; but he was yet quicker to apologize, if he had spoken too strongly, than to be angry. He was incapable of malice; he was one of the most forgiving of men. He was anything but a Stoic, but he never indulged in vain regrets any more than in settled resentment. Scarcely any other man could have carried such vast cares so lightly as he did. "I feel and I grieve," he says, "but, by the grace of God, I fret at nothing."

He was full of wit and pleasant humour, as all who have read his Journal or any of the larger biographies of him well know.

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Southey, Stevens, and Tyerman all give excellent instances of this. The one fact which I have found it difficult to reconcile with any sense of humour, and with his general sunniness and kindliness of disposition, is the seemingly morose asceticism of his rules for the management of Kingswood School. In an earlier page of this volume I have suggested what appears to be the only solution of this apparently strange incongruity—this monastic unkindliness. Public schools, in Wesley's time, and for many years afterward, were rude and harsh Spartan republics, where play meant coarse violence, and where free, unfettered intercourse among the boys meant mutual barbarizing and demoralization. Those who do not know the now happily almost incredible truth as to the state of public boarding-schools in the last century, will not be able to do justice to Wesley in this respect. Wesley himself had had a bitter experience at the Charterhouse. As for the mere hardness of the Kingswood regulations, it must be remembered that the regulations of all public schools were hard; very early rising, regular hours for prayer and worship, rigid fare, semi-monastic rules and usages, and special dress, prevailed every-

where alike—in Church of England schools, in Quaker schools, and in Moravian schools.

Before I close I must needs make some special reference to the manner in which Mr. Tyerman has dealt with the character of Wesley in his maturer and later life.

I wish to say a word, in the first place, about the history of Mr. M'Nab, and the affair at Bath with respect to this preacher and the Rev. Mr. Smyth, of Dublin. Mr. Tyerman has given a full and faithful history of the whole affair, for which he deserves our thanks. But while he evidently enters fully into the position and convictions of the preacher who thought himself aggrieved, he does not seem truly to have realized Mr. Wesley's own position and necessities. While we cannot but strongly sympathize in a certain sense with the case of M'Nab, it is, I think, clear that Wesley could not have acted otherwise than he did, and that his conduct in the whole affair deserves the highest praise. It was a crisis in which Wesley could not have given way. But although he remained firm, he respected the feelings and convictions of his preacher; treated him with generous consideration, and, notwithstanding the opposition of his brother, received him back into favour. So long as Wesley

lived, he could not absolutely part with his power. He used it in this case to provide an opening for an Irish clergyman (Mr. Smyth), for whom it seemed necessary to provide; various and important interests, both in England and in Ireland, appearing to require that he should so provide. He was accustomed to move his preachers from place to place according to the exigency of the hour; nor could his great work have ever been carried on without the exercise of his discretion and authority in so doing. Some years before, he had been obliged suddenly to remove Mr. M'Nab from Edinburgh, where he had had no more wisdom than to preach controversially against the doctrine of "final perseverance," and so had made his position too hot to bear. In the present case the special ground of complaint against Mr. Wesley was that M'Nab was removed to make way for Mr. Smyth, who had come over to labour under Mr. Wesley's directions, and for whom, as an ordained clergyman, Bath seemed to be a peculiarly suitable sphere. Surely Wesley cannot be blamed for using his admitted power in the present instance. M'Nab rose up against Wesley with ecclesiastical arguments, arguments as to pastoral rights and so forth, which could have no force as

against Mr. Wesley, because of the specific and undeniable relations which subsisted between the Patriarch of Methodist itinerancy and his followers, and which were a necessary element in the covenant subsisting between them. M'Nab's arguments and his resistance were no doubt edged very keenly by his antipathy to the Church of England and his jealousy of any superiority claimed by, or allowed to, her clergy. But Wesley could hardly have done otherwise than he did, and certainly is not to be censured for the part he took. He could not have submitted himself, and all his prerogatives and powers, to the theoretical claims of one of his junior preachers, a strong Scottish *doctrinaire*, a Presbyterian theorist, however amiable or estimable, without breaking down his authority and discipline altogether; but he showed no vindictiveness, and hastened to reinstate his contumacious follower, who, however, one is not much surprised to learn, ended his course as an Independent Pastor, having, before he left Methodism, been for a time in correspondence with the unfaithful preacher whom Mr. Tyerman brands as "the traitor Atlay." In this, as in some other matters, a larger general view of Wesley's position and principles—of the whole situation—



would, in our judgment, have led Mr. Tyerman to a different conclusion from that which he has pronounced.

It appears to me that Mr. Tyerman has failed to apprehend fully the position in which Wesley found himself as to the Church of England, or the powerful reasons which made it impossible for him to accept in full the position of the founder of a new and distinct Church; a Church outside the Church of England, and apart from all other Churches. I do not hesitate to declare my own deepening conviction, that Wesley could not, as a wise man—could hardly as a sane man—have taken any other position than that to which he held so fast. He was not called by Providence to organize a distinctly and fully independent Church. If he had undertaken the task he must have undertaken responsibilities which, at his time of life, in his circumstances, and with his antecedents, he could not possibly have sustained. He did all he could to meet the feelings and views of those who demanded separation. He was not obstinate or immovable; he was eminently candid and open-minded. He yielded whenever it was necessary to yield. He moved as far as he was obliged, though no

farther. This, I think, was not weak timidity on his part, but was dictated by considerations of wise Christian expediency. Nothing else in Wesley would have been consistent or tolerable. In the many instances, accordingly, in which Mr. Tyerman censures Wesley for not fully recognizing the claims of his preachers to the full status of pastors, and to constitute of and by themselves the supreme and independent governing authority for the Societies, I think him to be in error. I do not admit that the Methodist preachers had any necessary Divine right to be ordained as Presbyters, still less to be constituted the supreme and sole governing body and fountain of authority for the Societies of Methodism, constituted into an independent and organized Church.

At the same time I, of course, fully recognize the fact (as Wesley himself, with beautiful candour, always did, notwithstanding the violent antagonism of his brother Charles), that, from their point of view, the demands of the preachers were very natural, and not at all unreasonable; that, apart from Wesley's personal history and necessities, and from the prejudices and feelings of many within Methodism, and of many without,

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very much was to be said for the claims they urged.

In the first part of this volume I have spoken of the austerity, with which Mr. Tyerman deals with Wesley in all cases in which the propriety of his conduct seems at all open to controversy. This characteristic appears very strongly in his manner of treating the history of Wesley's relations with two eminently useful and devoted women, and in his judgments respecting the women themselves. In the instances to which I refer, he seems to me to have done unintentional but serious injustice, not only to Wesley himself, but to these excellent women—women with whom Wesley was in intimate relations.

It will be anticipated that I refer, as one of these cases, to Wesley's relations with Grace Murray. As to this case, Mr. Tyerman sums up his judgment in these strong words: "John Wesley was a dupe; Grace Murray was a flirt; John Bennet was a cheat: Charles Wesley was a sincere, but irritated, impetuous, and officious friend."\* I confess that I cannot accept this summary judgment. The case is unquestionably one of no little difficulty and perplexity. But

\* Tyerman's "Wesley," vol. ii. p. 55.

Mr. Tyerman cuts the knot with a coarse knife, whereas it needs to be untied with a skilful hand. Grace Murray is not justly described as "a flirt." All we know of her, apart from this affair, renders it very improbable that she should have proved herself to be such in this case. She was a woman not only of singular tact, but of attractive modesty, of perfect propriety, and of deep piety.\* All we know of her would lead to the conclusion that she would have been not an unworthy helpmeet for John Wesley. Wesley worked in her company during many months, and closely watched her for years. We have his distinct, deliberate, and emphatic testimony as to her gifts and graces, her whole character and deportment. Her Diary remains to us; and we know the superiority of her character and the savour of her piety in her long after-life as the wife and widow of John Bennet. Mr. Tyerman himself has furnished full evidence on this point. Such a woman it is hard to suspect of being guilty of "flirtation" with John Bennet, still more with one so revered as Wesley, and more still with Bennet and Wesley together. The temper of "a flirt" would certainly have shown itself much

\* There is nothing in the history of her residence at the Orphan House, as read by a fair interpreter, inconsistent, with this conclusion.

rather in her relations with inferior men than with Wesley. No doubt she was strongly attached to Bennet, on whom she had attended assiduously as a nurse for six months, and who seems to have thought himself secure of her affections and of her acceptance of himself whenever he should be prepared to ask it. But if others had not interfered—had not represented to her that she would be sinning against Christ and His Church, that she was under temptation herself and was making herself a tempter or cause of temptation to Wesley—she would, no doubt, have gratefully and humbly made herself Wesley's helper and cherisher for life. Those who for various reasons were opposed to Wesley's marrying Grace Murray, played continually upon her sensibility and tenderness of conscience, and thus kept her in most painful oscillation or vacillation. Sometimes, also, they did what they could to sow jealousy and suspicion in her mind, so as to alienate her, if possible, from Wesley. These parties all supported Bennet's plea and claim, for obvious reasons. Bennet himself exerted all his authority and influence in the same direction. It is possible to understand the perplexed history to which I have referred without imputing

heartless trifling to Grace Murray, although she undoubtedly showed not a little weakness in the affair; but it is impossible to clear either John Bennet or Wesley's brother Charles from all obliquity of conduct in the part they took in this matter. Throughout, the character of Wesley himself shines most beautifully in connection with this love affair, to him, without question, the most painful trial of his life. His own touching and beautiful poem on the subject remains in evidence of his feelings in the case.

From Mr. Tyerman's criticisms on the case of Mrs. Ryan I still more strongly dissent than from his judgment in the matter of Grace Murray. I think the principles on which he has dealt with this case are altogether wrong. The unfavourable antecedents of her early life are made much of—far too much of, in my judgment. But notwithstanding those antecedents, whatever they were, her proved character and merits were such as to recommend her to the esteem and intimate friendship of some of the most excellent Christians of her time—Christians of high social propriety and breeding, as well as of pre-eminent Christian character, among whom Miss Bosanquet (Mrs. Fletcher), after John Wesley, was one of the most conspicuous.

To assume that such a woman, because of her early life and connections, ought not to have been employed by Wesley as a housekeeper and a Class-leader, is, I think, particularly unworthy of a Methodist historian, and opposed to the spirit of Christ's Gospel of grace. That Wesley was right in the confidence he gave to Mrs. Ryan was demonstrated by the result. She was eminently useful and respected in situations of important trust, in which Wesley placed her. Where others had failed, she succeeded. No other woman could compare with her, except Grace Murray, who had been so useful to Wesley many years before. She was a remarkably gifted and a most devoted woman. And her life, to its close, justified the confidence which Wesley reposed in her.

Mr. Tyerman's judgment in these cases is singularly severe, as respects all the parties concerned, not excepting Mr. Wesley. He reflects upon Wesley for taking Grace Murray with him on a pillion in his journeys, several times, when there was special work for her to do. Surely he cannot be ignorant of the universal custom of Wesley's day for women to ride on pillion behind men, either father, brother, husband, affianced lover, trusted and reputable friend, of suitable age, or man-

servant. Mrs. Charles Wesley travelled many miles in this way behind preachers or manservants. To impute imprudence to Wesley in the matter in question is exceedingly strange. Mr. Tyerman condemns Grace Murray, again, because in her earlier life, being under terrible temptation at the time—temptation which assailed the very foundations of her faith—she yet persevered in meeting her Class, and in all her other public engagements. To those familiar with the memoirs of such men as Richard Baxter, in former times, and Richard Treffry, in later times and in Methodist circles, a censure of Grace Murray on such an account must seem passing strange. But Mr. Tyerman seems to have very little sympathy with spirits exercised by sore doubt and temptation. Wesley's doubts, and fears, and self-condemnation, soon after his conversion, appear to him to be a painful mystery ; whereas to most others they will appear to have been not only natural in themselves, but an appropriate and valuable part of the discipline through which such a teacher and leader as Wesley could not but be expected to pass.

Mr. Tyerman more than intimates that Wesley was imprudent in keeping up an extensive and confidential correspondence with a large number of female disciples. Of that cor-



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respondence many samples have been printed. I would ask any one familiar with those letters, or who has fairly realised what Wesley was to the leading spirits throughout all his societies—their special personal pastor and spiritual father—or in what relation his personal instructions and influence stood to the whole work of Methodism throughout all the Kingdom and in Ireland, to judge what Methodism would have lost if such a correspondence had not been kept up. It is scarcely too much to say, that Methodism could hardly have been well sustained without it. Because of the wicked and insane jealousy of Mrs. Wesley, Mr. Tyerman decides that Wesley's correspondence with Mrs. Ryan, "pure and pious" as he justly declares it to have been, ought not to have been continued.

And now I must write my last paragraph. I have offered no adequate criticism of Mr. Tyerman's three volumes; my object, indeed, has been independent of any special critical view. I have wished to give my own views of Wesley, as looked at in lights in which he has been but seldom regarded. I desire, in closing, to repeat that, though I differ from Mr. Tyerman at not a few points, I fully recognize the great value of his volumes. His unequalled knowledge in

detail of the whole ground over which he leads his readers is a great recommendation. That knowledge is perfectly mastered, and is digested and presented in perfect order and clearness. I do not, indeed, think that miserable and scandalous tracts which fell still-born from the press when first published, and never got a hearing—never were remembered or made the slightest impression while he lived—should be resuscitated and rehabilitated in Mr. Tyerman's pages. It lends to such productions an importance which never belonged to them; it is, in fact, misleading, because it leaves the impression that there may have been some foundation for them, or, at least, that they attracted some attention and possessed some importance at the time. But, apart from this feature in Mr. Tyerman's volumes, I can only thank him most heartily for his ample and wonderful research. If he were, in future editions, to spare us needless details of the sort I have indicated, he might save space for such statements, reflections, and general views, here and there, as would more distinctly represent Wesley's character, position, and motives, than has now been done even in his volumes. We want to be made to understand Wesley by the light and

insight proper to his own character, objects, and surroundings; to judge him as if we had lived both then and now, with him and his contemporaries, as well as in this present age. The mere facts Mr. Tyerman gives, and also the correspondence, in part; but still Wesley is judged too much by the feeling and opinion of to-day instead of by the light of his own circumstances and age. Nevertheless Mr. Tyerman has done a great work. He has furnished perfect means of knowledge; the means, indeed, if he is carefully read, of correcting himself where he is wrong. His narrative of the most important parts of Wesley's life is particularly full and good. The last two chapters, for example, are complete and impressive in a high degree; presenting Wesley's later years and last days as they had never been presented before. In fine, Mr. Tyerman has prepared and worked up into narrative almost complete materials from which to prepare a re-moulded biography of Wesley, which shall, with perfect realization, exhibit him as he grew and changed, and was enlarged from stage to stage—as he felt and judged and acted from point to point of his eventful life.\*

\* The date of Wesley's death was March 2, 1791. His age was eighty-seven.

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